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OF
READING BOOKS

four essays

by

JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES

The Pilgrim's Progress

The Noblest Monument of English Prose

Two Readings of Earth

Of Reading Books

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PREFACE

ALL four of these essays—if indeed they have a right to be so called—were originally written to be listened to rather than read. And the occasions which virtually determined their subjects were all, in varying degrees, academic. Few prospective readers of a book, I fear, begin with the Preface. For those wiser ones who do, these doubly damning facts are here recorded, as a dispassionate *caveat emptor*—or *lector*. It is, however, only fair to add that even academic gatherings are (or may be) also human.

The last Address (to use the term of fashion and ceremony) was meant to be informal, and its colloquial turn has been retained. *Sermoni propriora*[1]—even perhaps in the sense of Charles Lamb's wicked rendering, "properer for a sermon"—fits its case, and to starch its style would be to change its kind. The papers on the English Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress* owe their existence to tercentenaries. And the occasion of "Two Readings of Earth" is indicated in its opening paragraph.

The kind permission of *The Yale Review* and of the Yale University Press to reprint the last

[1] So Coleridge consistently. But never was misquotation more happily justified in the event.

named, copyrighted, article is gratefully acknowledged. And thanks are also due to the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, the *Radcliffe Quarterly*, and the *Simmons College Review* for similar courtesies.

J. L. L.

28 *January* 1930.

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THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

A Study in Literary Immortality

JOHN BUNYAN was born in 1628. Just fifty years later, in 1678, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was modestly put forth. And a moment's thought about the world into which it quietly slipped reveals a singular paradox. Consider, in a word, the names which lend glory to English letters in this same seventeenth century. Shakespeare, during its first decade, was at the zenith of his powers. Bacon towers, like Archangel ruined, as its first quarter ends. The closing years of the third saw Milton once for all assume his place with Homer, Virgil, and Dante. Dryden's "majestic march" held on its stormy way through the last forty years. And John Donne, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick, Henry Vaughan, Jeremy Taylor, Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, and a score of illustrious names besides, star the intervening years. Yet save for Shakespeare and possibly Milton, the seventeenth-century book most widely read, and through 250 years most universally familiar, was written by an unlearned Puritan preacher, once a tinker, as a dream dreamt in the Bedford gaol. For *The Pilgrim's Progress* is known not only to everyone who is

conversant with the other writings of the period, but to thousands, the world around, who never heard of the *Essays*, or *The Alchemist*, or " Go and catch a falling star," or *Hesperides*, or *The Temple*, or *Silex Scintillans*, or the *Anatomy*, or *Religio Medici*, or *All for Love*. It has coloured the imagination and stamped itself upon the phraseology of ten generations of the English-speaking race, and it is read besides in more than one hundred other languages and dialects. What is the secret of an enduring popularity beside which the passing vogues of the best sellers of the day are as a farthing-candle to the sun? I shall have nothing new or startling to bring forward in another of the perennial attempts to find an answer. But the elements of the problem are of deep human interest, and any essay, however unadventurous, at a solution, will bring old facts into fresh juxtapositions. And first a word about the setting of the stage.

For few writers is a study of their temporal background so important and yet at first blush so seemingly irrelevant as in Bunyan's case. For perhaps the most amazing fact about him is his complete isolation from all but one of the great currents of his times. Let me make clear by concrete illustration what I mean. The so-called *Term Catalogues* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are lists of the books published at London in Hilary, Easter, Trinity, and Michaelmas terms each year. The first volume covers the years from 1668 to 1682—

the period within which fall all but one of Bunyan's four great works. Like its predecessor, the *Stationers' Register,* it is one of the most fascinating documents in the world, and as instructive as it is diverting. And since there is no swifter way to gain a vivid picture of a period than by seeing *en masse* the titles of the books which issued from its press, the *Term Catalogues* offer an expeditious means of reconstructing the background against which *The Pilgrim's Progress* must be thrown. We shall have to confine ourselves to a single year, and even in that to but a handful of its publications. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was printed in Hilary term, 1678. What were some of its associates among the books of that one year?

In that year, for one thing, titles such as these crowd the catalogues: "The mock *Clelia*; being a Comical History of French Gallantries and Novels"; "The Heroin Musqueteer, or The Female Warrior. A true History, very delightful and full of pleasant Adventures"; "Five Love Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier"; "The Rambling Justice, or The Jealous Husbands"; "Trick for Trick, or The Debauch'd Hypocrite"; "The Vice-Roy of *Catalonia,* or the Double Cuckold"; "The obliging Mistris, or The Fashionable Gallant"; "The Amorous Convert"; "Squire *Old Sap,* or the Night Adventures"; "A pleasant Novel, discovering the Humours and Intrigues of a Town Gallant, in the delectable Amours of

Altophel and *Astrea*." And Wycherley's grossly sensual *Plain Dealer* had been published less than a year before. The Restoration, with all its works, was in full swing. And the measure of its remoteness from John Bunyan is afforded by a sentence from his earlier treatise, pleasantly entitled *A Few Sighs from Hell; or, The Groans of a Damned Soul.* The Soul in torment is recalling its past life. Many a time the preacher had told him hell would be his portion, and had urged upon him the reading of the Scriptures. What, alas! had been his fatal answer? "What is the Scripture? Give me a ballad, a newsbook, George on horseback, or Bevis of Southampton, give me some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables." And now, as a result, he sighs in hell. One fact, at least, is obvious. The man whose idea of criminal indulgences in reading were of that pristine innocence moved in a different universe from Mrs. Aphra Behn, or Tom D'Urfey, or William Wycherley, or the authors of "Delectable Amours" and "Comical Histories." *The Pilgrim's Progress* was not carried into favour upon that tide.

Nor was it upon another. One of the strangest things in the world is the way in which great formative currents of thought which are one day to put a different face upon the universe, move quietly on, as it were, through the upper reaches of the atmosphere, while the region below remains as unstirred by their progression as are the leaves of a summer

noon by the flow of air which propels the slow-sailing clouds. The seventeenth century, as Professor Whitehead has recently epitomized its genius in a brilliant chapter, was one of the most momentous in the history of human thought. The list of the men who published to the world important work within its limits includes the names of Bacon, Harvey, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Huygens, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Spinoza, and Leibnitz. It was, beyond doubt, in the field of constructive thought, "the century of genius." In England, Bacon had died but two years before Bunyan was born; in the year of Bunyan's birth, William Harvey published his discovery of the circulation of the blood. Newton's *Principia* saw the light the year before Bunyan's death. When *Grace Abounding* was published, the Royal Society was four years old. Robert Boyle was inventing his air-pump in the year that saw *Sighs from Hell*, and was incessantly experimenting through the whole of Bunyan's literary life. Locke's great *Essay concerning Human Understanding* was incubating at the period when *The Pilgrim's Progress* was begun. And the *Term Catalogues* for the year of the allegory's publication list treatise upon treatise, largely sponsored by the vigorous young Royal Society, in the new fields of scientific exploration and discovery. But of the tremendous intellectual adventure of his century, synchronous though it was at every point with his own spiritual pilgrimage, Bunyan could not have

been more oblivious had he been a denizen of the moon.

There was, however, a third current which was flowing full and strong. For the nation, if we exclude the men of learning and the circles which centred about the court, it was beyond comparison the widest in its influence of all. The group of books headed "Divinity" in the *Term Catalogues* is made up largely of sermons—of sermons, for example, on "The Believer's Groan for Heaven," "*Achitophel* Befool'd," "A Wollen Shroud, or Learn to Dye!" "Ευρηκα! Ευρηκα! The Virtuous woman found"; "Say on! or a seasonable Plea for a full Hearing betwixt man and man." The godly tractates and pious chansons sometimes have, to be sure, in the *Catalogues*, queer company. "The History of the Birth, Life, Sufferings, and Death, of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*" succeeds without interval "The feigned Courtezan, or a night's intreague"; "A Divine Poem upon *Joseph* and his Brethren" follows at once, with undesigned humour, "*Cytherea*, or the Enamouring Girdle." Publishers, like Paul, must be all things to all men, that by all means they may reach some. But in the *Catalogue* for Hilary term, secure from corrupting influence under "Divinity," and tucked away among the sermons, *The Pilgrim's Progress* stands as the ninth item for the year. It is flanked, on the one side, by "Μαρτυρολογία Αλφαβετική, or An Alphabetical Martyrology . . . extracted out of Fox's 'Acts and

Monuments of the Church'"; on the other side by "The Young Man's Calling, or The whole Duty of Youth. . . . Together with Remarks on the Lives of several excellent young Persons, who have been famous for Vertue and Piety. With Sculptures illustrating the several Histories." It stands, that is, through a curious coincidence, between extracts from the very volumes which Bunyan might have called (as Chaucer called his Ovid) "myn owene book," and lives of youthful Christians and Standfasts and Faithfuls. And the utter fortuitousness of the juxtaposition lends point to its significance. For through the mid-century, remote alike from Theatre Royal and Royal Society, there flowed a steady stream of books, the end of which, whatever the form, was edification. And the form was often alluring enough. The next title after "The Young Man's Calling" is this: "The Sea-man's Spiritual Companion, or Navigation spiritualized. A Poem; being a new Compass for Seamen, consisting of Thirty-two Points, directing every Christian how to stear the Course of his Life through all Storms and Tempests. By W. Balmford." Bunyan and Balmford have a common theme; only Balmford's Christian is a mariner, and his pilgrimage a voyage. And no less suggestive is a title a few pages farther on: "A Christian's Walk and Work on Earth until he attain to Heaven; which may serve as a Practical Guide, and a plain direction in his Pilgrimage thither. . . . Marvellously useful to all Persons and

Families of all Ranks and Qualities, both in City and Country." Despite his isolation from the other interests of his times, there was a current, and a strong one, with which Bunyan moved. For *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in its scheme as well as in its object, is not unique. But for us the point of interest is this. "The Sea-man's Spiritual Companion," and "The Christian's Walk and Work on Earth" are dead—as dead as trilobites or door-nails. You may still read them in the British Museum; where else, I do not know. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been read, and still is read, by millions. It is perennially alive. Why the difference? And now we come at last to Bunyan himself.

Let us waive, temporarily, the accident of genius. Unquestionable as that genius was, the turn which it took was determined to an almost unique degree by the interplay of personality and circumstance. The year of Bunyan's birth saw the Petition of Right and the murder of Buckingham; the year of his death ushered in the Revolution. Between lay the Civil War and the Regicide and the Commonwealth and the Protectorate and the Restoration—then tyranny again. During his lifetime, in a word, England was the theatre of one of the fiercest, most passionate of all the great historic struggles for political and religious liberty. Of the two phases of the conflict, the one caught Bunyan up for a moment, willy-nilly—then dropped him without leaving an appreciable mark; the other first revolu-

tionized, then stamped indelibly, both his inner and his outward life. Of that inner life, the experience described in *Grace Abounding* is for us the crucial point, and I shall deal summarily with the few known antecedent facts.

John Bunyan came of old, free-holding English stock. The Bunyans of his lineage had held land in and about his native village of Elstow in Bedfordshire as early as 1199. He sprang from no upstart or vagrant strain. His father, described in an early document as " an honest poor labouring man, who, like Adam, unparadised, had all the world before him to get his bread in," calls himself in his will a " brasier," and his son, in his will, designates himself by the same term. Brazier and tinker are one and the same; he was, and his father before him, a maker and mender of pots and kettles, with a workshop and forge at Elstow, and itinerant trade through the countryside. " My Descent," he writes in *Grace Abounding*, " was . . . of a low and inconsiderable Generation; my Father's House being of that Rank that is meanest and most despised of all the Families in the Land. . . . But yet," he goes on, " . . . it pleased God to put it into their Hearts to put me to School, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the Rate of other poor Men's Children; though to my shame I confess I did soon lose that little I learnt, even almost utterly. . . . I had but few Equals," he continues, " . . . both for cursing,

swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy Name of *God.* . . . I was the very Ringleader of all the Youth that kept me company." From the bare phrase "When I was a Soldier," prefixed to an anecdote, it has always been known that he saw military service somewhere. But there is not a word in all his voluminous writings to give a hint of the side on which he fought. For him, after his conversion, Parliament *v.* King stood to God *v.* devil as an ant-hill to the universe. We know now, from the recently discovered muster-rolls of Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire, that he was one of the parliamentary garrison of that town from November, 1644, when he had reached sixteen (the age of compulsory service) until about 1647. The garrison of Newport saw no very active service. Save for stored up recollections later to lend vividness to the allegory of *The Holy War*, the momentous struggle for free institutions seems to have moved John Bunyan not at all. "Presently after this, I changed," he writes, "my Condition into a married State, and my Mercy was to light upon a Wife whose Father was counted godly. This Woman and I "—we do not even know her name—"though we came together as poor as poor might be (not having so much household stuff as a Dish or Spoon betwixt us both,) yet this she had for her part, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, and *The Practice of Piety*, which her *Father* had left her when he died. In these two Books I should sometimes

read with her . . . but all this while I met with no Conviction." And that brings us to an experience through which we touch the very heart and centre of our problem.

Unless it be certain passages of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, I know no human document which reveals with such intensity as *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* the struggle of a soul in agony. Throughout Augustine's great self-revelation one of the keenest of mortal intellects is at once actor and spectator and consummate analyst of the conflict. In Bunyan's recital, so vividly direct and concrete and intimate is the narrative that one feels as one reads the sheer impact of immediate experience. There are heights and depths in the *Confessions* which *Grace Abounding* never knew. *Quia fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, till it rest in Thee"—the majesty of that profound and haunting sentence was out of Bunyan's scope. But in Bunyan's book the daring title of Francis Thompson's record of like experience finds its warrant. For in *Grace Abounding* the Hound of Heaven was on Bunyan's traces, as he "fled Him, down the nights and down the days." It must be read entire to feel its power; but a cento of excerpts will give some inkling of its singular quality. And in that quality lies half, but only half, the secret of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

It is the terrible immediacy of the experience,

then, and a directness of speech which sometimes strikes, as Bunyan said of a certain scripture, "like a hot thunderbolt," that reveal themselves in the three passages which I have chosen. The document is of a piece; my selections, far from being exceptional, represent its very texture.

The first follows a period of deep despair: "I found myself as on a miry Bog that shook if I did but stir. . . . I was more loathsome in my own Eyes than was a Toad. . . . I began to entertain such discouragement in my Heart as laid me low as Hell."

Now about a Week or Fortnight after this, I was much followed by this Scripture, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you.* And sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some Man had, behind me, called to me; being at a great distance, methought he called so loud . . . I thought verily, as I have told you, that somebody had called after me, that was half a Mile behind me; and although that was not my Name, yet it made me suddenly look behind me, believing that he who called so loud meant me. . . .

About the space of a Month after a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before. It came stealing upon me, now by one piece, then by another; first, all my comfort was taken from me, then darkness seized upon me, after which, whole floods of blasphemies . . . were poured upon my spirit. . . . These suggestions

(with many other which at this time I may not, nor dare not utter, neither by word nor pen), did make such a seizure upon my spirit, and did so overweigh my heart, both with their number, continuance, and fiery force, that I felt as if there were nothing else but these from morning to night within me. . . . In these days, when I have heard others talk of what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, then would the Tempter so provoke me to desire to sin that sin, that I was as if I could not, must not, neither should be quiet until I had committed that. Now, no sin would serve but that; if it were to be committed by speaking of such a word, then I have been as if my Mouth would have spoken that word, whether I would or no; and in so strong a measure was this temptation upon me, that often I have been ready to clap my hand under my Chin, to hold my Mouth from opening. . . . And now my heart was . . . exceeding hard. If I would have given a thousand Pounds for a Tear, I could not shed one.

Then came "a more grievous and dreadful Temptation than before."

And that was, *To sell and part with this most blessed Christ, to exchange him for the things of this life, for anything.* The Temptation lay upon me for the space of a year, and did follow me so continually that I was not rid of it one day in a Month, no, not sometimes one hour in many days together, unless when I was asleep. . . . I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast mine eye to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, *Sell Christ for this*, or *sell Christ for that; sell him, sell him.*

Sometimes it would run in my thoughts, not so little as a hundred times together, *Sell him, sell him, sell him*; against which I may say, for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it . . . that by the very force of my mind, in labouring to gainsay and resist this wickedness, my very body also would be put into action or motion by way of pushing or thrusting with my hands or elbows, still answering, as fast as the destroyer said, *Sell him; I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not; no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands of Worlds.* . . . But to be brief, one Morning, as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation, *to sell and part with Christ*; the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, *Sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him*, as fast as a man could speak. Against which also, in my mind, as at other times, I answered, *No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands*, at least twenty times together. But at last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart, *Let him go, if he will!* and I thought also, that I felt my heart freely consent thereto. . . . Now was the battle won, and down fell I, as a Bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt, and fearful despair. . . .

William James, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, classes Bunyan among the "Sick Souls." He is that, at this period, no doubt; the voices and the visions and the diabolical suggestions and the hound-like fears are beyond all question psychopathic. But there is something more. Bunyan did

not know it, but there are elements in his experience which hark back a thousand years. For so vivid are the hallucinations that one feels, as one reads the thing entire, behind the Christian phraseology, a sense of something primitive and pagan—of those dark, inscrutable powers that still haunt their ancient habitations, and lurk, and call, and beckon, and pursue. When the tempter calls up to Bunyan's fancy "the form of a bush, or a bull, or a besom . . . as if I should pray to these," the old, uncanny shapes, as we read, for an instant people once more the fields and cross-roads. Dürer's "Knight, Death, and the Devil," with its fleering, fantastic presences, might well be the frontispiece of *Grace Abounding*—except that Dürer's Knight is Mr. Standfast.

But in spite of its poignant human interest, and in spite of a phraseology which is not so much the medium of feeling as the live and throbbing thing itself, *Grace Abounding* is not a familiar book. And the reason, which bears directly on our question, lies in its very nature. It is molten stuff which is not yet moulded—a profoundly significant human document, but not a work of art. It is intensely personal, but it is not universal. Once impregnate with that sense of immediate personal experience a conception of which the appeal is universal, and a masterpiece is apt to be born. *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding* have a common theme—the struggle of a human soul. But in *The Pilgrim's Pro-*

gress the struggle, still vivid with Bunyan's own remembered experience, has become the Odyssey not of one soul, but of every soul. How did the metamorphosis come about?

In November, 1660, Bunyan was arrested as " an upholder and maintainer of unlawful conventicles," and for twelve years lay in the county gaol at Bedford. It was here, before 1666, that *Grace Abounding* was written. In 1672 he was released, and resumed his preaching. In 1675 he was again arrested, and for something under a year was once more a prisoner, this time in the town gaol of Bedford, which stood on the bridge across the Ouse. It was in this " Denn," during the second imprisonment, that the First Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was conceived. Through the curious irony of things, the immortal tale was a by-product—a fact which Bunyan tells us himself in the lively and artless lines of " The Author's Apology for his Book ":

When at the first I took my Pen in hand,
Thus for to write; I did not understand
That I at all should make a little Book
In such a mode; Nay, I had undertook
To make another, which when almost done,
Before I was aware, I this begun.
And thus it was: I writing of the Way |
And Race of Saints, in this our Gospel-Day,
Fell suddenly into an Allegory
About their Journey, and the way to Glory,
In more than twenty things, which I set down;

This done, I twenty more had in my Crown,
And they again began to multiply,
Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.
Nay, then, thought I, if that you breed so fast,
I'll put you by yourselves, lest you at last
Should prove *ad infinitum*, and eat out
The Book that I already am about.
Well, so I did . . . and so I penn'd
It down; until at last it came to be
For length and breadth the bigness which you see.

It is easy to guess what book it was which all at once in its pedestrian pace was startled by a sudden consciousness of wings. Just after his release from gaol the second time, Bunyan published *The Strait Gate; or, Great Difficulty of Going to Heaven.* And as the treatise is drawing to a close, he sets down a series of trenchant little sketches—miniature characters of a dozen types of " professors " (as he calls them), who enter upon the race, but fail to reach the goal. They are, in fact, caustic prefigurings, lacking only names, and legs and tongues to walk and talk with, of Mr. By-ends, Mr. Legality, Mr. Talkative, and others of their breed, in the narrative soon to be. All at once, as the picturesque sentences were penned, the conception, implied in the tractate's very title, of the road and the types who travel it, sprang into vivid, concrete form in Bunyan's mind. Like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, it " grew and grew "; and outgrowing its didactic setting, cut loose and became a master-

piece. And now I come back to the question with which we started: What is the secret of its enduring hold upon generation after generation of its readers?

There is one literary type, and only one, to which the ancient *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—acceptance always, everywhere, by everybody—incontestably applies. That is the *story*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* is above all things else a tale. More than that, it is a tale of wayfaring and adventure, with a flavour of old romance—giants and highwaymen and caves and castles and haunted valleys and enchanted grounds—the most irresistible combination in the world. Moreover, it has in high degree that enchanting trait which lends fascination to the folk tale and *Alice in Wonderland* and a dream—the perpetual telescoping of the familiar with the strange. We find ourselves in a bolted dungeon, the prisoners of an authentic chap-book giant and his wife, or alone on a perilous sword-edge pathway, dark as pitch, among doleful voices and rushings to and fro of Hobgoblins and Satyrs and Dragons of the Pit—and we have come on them without surprise by way of pleasant English lanes and meadows, and upon crossing our English stiles. It is all as matter-of-course and as unexpected as a fairy-tale. Furthermore, along the King's Highway and down the green lanes and through the streets of Vanity Fair move living men, however named, who meet and pass and talk and argue and

dispute, in the fresh and vivid idiom of the English countryside. And running through the narrative, charged with deep feeling, is a symbolism, simple and straightforward, which lifts it, still indefeasibly a story, into yet another realm of universal human interest.

The story begins with a scene which one sometimes feels is unsurpassed in fiction for sheer graphic power:

> As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed, and behold *I saw a man cloathed with Rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back.* I looked, and saw him open the Book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry; saying, *What shall I do?*
>
> I saw also that he looked this way, and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because as I perceived he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a Man named *Evangelist* coming to him, and asked, *Wherefore doest thou cry?* He answered, Sir, I perceive, by the Book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to Judgement; and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.

Then after swift question and answer, Evangelist gives him a Parchment-roll.

The Man therefore read it, and looking upon *Evangelist* very carefully; said, Whither must I fly? Then said *Evangelist*, pointing with his finger over a very wide Field, Do you see yonder *Wicket-gate*? The Man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said *Evangelist*, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the Gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

So I saw in my Dream, that the Man began to run; now he had not run far from his own door, but his Wife and Children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return: but the Man put his fingers in his Ears, and ran on, crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life: so he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the Plain.

No opening that I know cuts straighter and more swiftly to the core, or sets a scene before the eyes with such compelling visualization. Let me repeat five lines of it, which epitomize the quality that penetrates the book:

The Man therefore read it, and looking upon *Evangelist* very carefully; said, Whither must I fly? Then said *Evangelist*, pointing with his finger over a very wide Field, Do you see yonder *Wicket-gate*? The Man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do.

That is not description; it is the thing itself. A man intently reading a roll; the lifting of his eyes

to scrutinize another man; the pointing finger; the wicket-gate; the shining light; the anxious travelling of the eye across the field and back again to the pointing finger, and once more peeringly across the field and back again—was there ever, I wonder, another passage into which, within such brief compass, so many visual impressions have been packed? It is easy to say what a thing is *like*, and thousands have the trick. Direct vision, with the power of evoking it in us, is the gift of few, and among them are the greatest. Bunyan has it, and it is with his unswerving intensity of vision that we see: "Behold I saw"; "I looked, and saw"; "I saw also"; "as I perceived"; "I looked then, and saw"; "So I saw in my Dream." It is no wonder that the pictures live and breathe. And one reason why the book itself has lived is a reason which it shares with *The Divine Comedy* and the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and a hundred passages in Shakespeare (to name no more)—the power of striking out, in a few naked, simple words, a picture which is ineffaceable.

Stevenson has a pertinent paragraph in *A Gossip on Romance*. "The threads of a story," he remarks, "come from time to time together and make a picture in the web. . . . Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears, these are each culminating moments in the legend, and

each has been printed on the mind's eye for ever.... This," he goes on, "is the highest and hardest thing to do in words; the thing which, once accomplished, equally delights the schoolboy and the sage, and makes, in its own right, the quality of epics." That in the main is true. But for Bunyan, I think, this *hardest* thing to do in words was the *only* thing to do. So intense and so dramatic was his visualizing energy that he participates in every bodily movement of his characters. That is why his pictures, with their utter simplicity, give the effect of things in three dimensions. We get the sense of movement; we feel obscure muscular responses; we begin ourselves to live in the characters, sharing in our own person their experiences. For myself, I know nothing quite like it.

Then *Christian* pulled [the Key] out of his bosom, and began to try at the Dungeon door, whose bolt (as he turned the Key) gave back, and the door flew open with ease.... After he went to the *Iron* Gate, for that must be opened too, but that Lock went *damnable* hard, yet the Key did open it; then they thrust open the Gate to make their escape with speed. . . .

Now a little before them, there was on the left hand of the Road, a *Meadow*, and a Stile to go over into it, and that *Meadow* is called *By-Path-Meadow*. Then said *Christian* to his fellow, If this Meadow lieth along by our way side, lets go over into it. So he went to the Stile to see, and behold a Path lay along by the way on the other side of the fence. 'Tis according to my wish said *Christian*, here is the easiest going; come, good

Hopeful, and let us go over. . . . So *Hopeful* . . . went after him over the Stile. . . .

So *Watchful* the *Porter* rang a Bell, at the sound of which came out at the door of the House a grave and beautiful Damsel, named *Discretion*, and asked why she was called.

That last is the stock scene of a hundred romances, touched with a dignity and beauty which none of them possess, but alive with movement in every phrase. And one of my own most vivid childhood recollections is that of another figure of folk-lore and romance—the impotent old Giant at the end of the Valley,

. . . grown so crazy, and stiff in his joints, that he can now do little more than sit in his Cave's mouth, grinning at Pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails, because he cannot come at them.

But even that picture yields in graphic intensity to this:

Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter, prepare thyself to die, for I swear . . . that thou shalt go no further, here will I spill thy soul.

And as for Christian,

I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived that he had wounded *Apollyon* with his two edged Sword, then indeed he did smile, and look upward: but *'twas the dreadfullest sight that ever I saw.*

John Bunyan had fought Apollyon too. And that brings us back for a moment to *Grace Abounding*.

For, in effect, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is *Grace Abounding* recollected in tranquillity. The sense of sheer, almost palpable reality which pervades it as no other allegory is pervaded in the world, has its springs in the intensity of those agonizings along the roads and in the fields and under the hedgerows of Bedfordshire. But that vividness of direct experience is now bathed, as it were, in a broad serenity like that of a race remembered when the immortal garland has been won. Let me illustrate from the setting of the story what I mean.

There is a trick of the brain with which everyone is familiar. Things come back to our memory steeped in the associations of the moment when they were experienced, and suffused with the feelings which the old associations have stirred—as I, for example, can never think of a certain Cornish field-path without feeling the air pervaded with the cuckoo's haunting call. And through the feeling so awakened, the picture which we paint or the incident which we set down, even though no outward and visible sign betray the influence, will possess a colour, a vibrancy, an emotional *potential*, which they could never otherwise have had. Now the stage of Bunyan's fierce spiritual conflict had been the English countryside and the life of its rural hamlets—the village green, the church steeple with the bells of his love and terrified renunciation,

a shop-window, a settle in the street, the spinsters and the knitters in the sun, footpaths and stiles, crows in a ploughed field, the country lanes, the cottage fire. Could these ever come back to his memory untinged with a dream-like vividness which still invests their homely, familiar actuality with something of the strangeness of another world? In particular, for a period of years, the roads and the by-paths of Bedfordshire had been haunted for him by invisible, importunate presences. Could he ever later walk along these roads without a flood of recollection? Experience of such poignancy as his stamps its setting indelibly upon the brain, and even when tranquillity has been attained, if, at whatever summons, the old setting comes back again to memory, it comes charged with the latent intensity of the original experience. That is why, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the story and the landscape—stiles and meadows and wicket-gates and crooked lanes—melt into one another in a harmony almost unique: a harmony pre-established years before on English country roads, which still holds unbroken through the pilgrimage by Doubting Castle and Broadway Gate and Dead Man's Lane and Bypath Meadow and the Enchanted Ground.

But the names which I have just recalled have a double bearing, for they bring us at once to the core of the book, to wit, the allegory. And allegory, for the last hundred years or so, has been the pet aver-

sion of the great majority of English readers. Yet in spite of its antiquated form, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has held serenely on its way. And it is possible, I think, to see the reason of the paradox.

The trouble with most allegories is that their analogies are either strained, or confused, or both. The symbol and the thing symbolized are apt to be more different than alike. The soul and a castle are both subject to attack, and so far forth a castle may and does legitimately symbolize the soul. But the soul has neither barbican nor moat nor drawbridge, and a castle neither affections nor volitions nor ideas. To force the analogy beyond the common element is to shatter all illusion of reality. And that nine allegories out of ten efficiently accomplish. Moreover, we object, not to symbols in themselves, but to a set of symbols carrying on a complicated action, and behaving now as symbols, now as the objects symbolized. We open, for example, the first canto of *The Faerie Queene*, and before we know it, we are captivated by a lovely damsel in distress, and are thrilled by the adventure of the Red Cross Knight with the loathly monster in the cave, and observe with concern the devilish machinations of an enchanter masquerading as a pious hermit of the dale, and are left, as the canto ends, in a state of delicious suspense: Will or will not the knight believe that the wanton in Una's form who comes to his bed is Una? So far, so good; we have embarked, it would seem, on an uncommonly engaging tale.

Then we turn back to the expository quatrain, and we read:

> The patrone of true Holinesse
> Foule Errour doth defeate:
> Hypocrisie, him to entrappe,
> Doth to his home entreate.

And Una has ceased to be Una, and the monster a monster, and the enchanter an enchanter, and they are instead, all three, personified abstractions, behaving as they do because at one moment they are thought of as a lovely lady and a monster and a sorcerer, and at another as Holiness and Error and Hypocrisy. And that maddening play of telescoping personalities goes on through not one canto only, but seventy-two. Is anybody in the allegory at any given moment, what he *is*, or what he *seems*? And which in Heaven's name, we ask, is which?

Now the allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is to the allegory in *The Faerie Queene* as a right line is to a labyrinth. The book is as simple and straightforward as its title-page: "The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to come, delivered under the similitude of a Dream. Wherein is discovered the Manner of his Setting out, his Dangerous Journey, and Safe Arrival at the desired Country." The allegory springs from, pursues unswervingly, and ends, in one conception, and that as ancient and as universal as mankind. A road, and a dangerous journey, and at the end a shining city paved with gold—that is a theme which for

ages has captivated all sorts and conditions of men; and when the road and the journey and the fair city at the journey's end are linked with the theme of a *pilgrimage*, the symbolism, deepened through centuries of associations, becomes instantly and universally intelligible. Nor is this instant intelligibility true of the pilgrimage alone. Throughout the allegory Bunyan draws his symbols from objects which, through long and intimate use and wont, have been saturated with symbolic value, or which in themselves are adapted to symbolic use. The symbolism is inherent, not devised. And the sense of utter familiarity with which the allegory is pervaded springs from these old and homely and inevitable emblems, as they in turn have their roots in that imagery in which Bunyan's mind was steeped —the inexhaustible symbolism of the Bible. Bunyan's allegory, unlike Spenser's, is "understanded of the people," because its symbols embody the vision, through succeeding generations, of simple, yet imaginative minds. They are as inevitable as the parables.

And in what words of pellucid beauty are the symbols often phrased! The Shining Ones, the "very stately Palace, the name of which was Beautiful," the House of the Interpreter, the Delectable Mountains, the "high Hill, called Clear," the Land of Beulah, the "grave and beautiful Damsel named Discretion," Mr. Great-heart, Mr. Stand-fast, Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. Like a dozen

others—the Slough of Despond, the Hill called Difficulty, Vanity Fair, By-Path-Meadow, Doubting Castle, Giant Despair, the Man with the Muckrake, the Enchanted Ground—they have ever since been current coin, a parcel of the common stock of English phraseology, as familiar as the turns of speech of Shakespeare and the Bible. And this aptness in the coinage of symbolic designations plays an undoubted part in the wide popularity of the allegory. For what we call the general public delights and always has delighted in symbolic phrases. If we think we have outgrown them, we are fooled. Even our own would-be sophisticated generation revels in them. Titles such as these, recalled at random, belong to the worldly-wise, disillusioned period since the 'nineties: The Wings of a Dove, The Golden Bowl, The Ivory Tower, The Candle of Vision, The Glittering Gate, Heart Break House, The Land of Heart's Desire, The Song of the Lark, The Undying Fire. And here, culled from many, are a few titles from the advertising section of a single number of a periodical of the current year: The House of Sun-goes-Down, The Eternal Moment, The Stranger at the Feast, The Island Within, The River Between, The Burning Bush, The Road to Heaven. It is perfectly true that nowadays we fight shy of formal allegory. Responsiveness to symbolism, on the other hand, is bred in the bone. And in his symbolic phraseology Bunyan is as modern as the fiction of 1928.

Moreover, in the exacting art of characterization he rivals and sometimes outstrips the masters, in their own technique. I have of late, I need scarcely say, been re-reading Bunyan, and at the same time, as it happens, Trollope, and Hardy, and Conrad, and a host of smaller fry. All at once, to my amazement, I realized this: barring Hardy's rustics, the people whom I heard talking, saw gesturing, felt as almost bodily presences, as they came unsummoned back to memory, were a dozen or so of Bunyan's pilgrims. Why should allegorical figures, with quaint, sometimes outlandish names, behave in this disconcerting fashion? Well, the quaint abstractions are, to be sure, the vehicles of allegory; but the one thing which, in Bunyan's hands, they cannot do, is to remain lay figures. Before we know it, they take the allegory in their teeth, and miraculously keeping it from dropping, go serenely their own gait. Except for occasional homiletic divagations, there is nothing remote or tenuous about them. And unlike Spenser's figures, once determined, they "stay put." They are palpable flesh and blood, and they talk—and talk in character—like people, not like books. English comedy lost a master when Bunyan was born Puritan.

HON. *But stay, now you talk of her, methinks I have either seen her, or have read some story of her.*

STANDFAST. Perhaps you have done both.

HON. *Madam Bubble? Is she not a tall comely Dame, something of a swarthy Complexion?*

STANDFAST. Right, you hit it, she is just such an one.

HON. *Doth she not speak very smoothly, and give you a Smile at the end of a Sentence?*

STANDFAST. You fall right upon it again; for these are her very Actions.

HON. *Doth she not wear a great Purse by her Side, and is not her Hand often in it, fingering her Mony, as if that was her Heart's delight?*

STANDFAST. 'Tis just so. Had she stood by all this while you could not . . . have better described her Features.

I am killing two birds with one stone, for the easy, colloquial turn of the dialogue is as masterly as the progressive delineation of the character. And Bunyan had the telling combination at his fingers' tips. His dialogue, in a play, would be the delight of actors. It was *heard*, every word and inflexion of it, as it was written down. The eye on the page misses half of it; it is the ear to which it speaks. Listen!

CHRISTIAN. *Well then, did you not know about ten years ago, one* Temporary *in your parts, who was a forward man in Religion then?*

HOPEFUL. Know him! Yes, he dwelt in *Graceless*, a Town about two miles off of *Honesty*, and he dwelt next door to one *Turn-back*.

CHRISTIAN. *Right, he dwelt under the same roof with him.*

There in six lines is a compendium of the art—or is it art at all, but Nature?—which gives to Bunyan's allegory instant verisimilitude. "Know him? Yes!"

—and who can longer doubt Temporary's tangible, corporeal existence? Graceless and Honesty *in vacuo* are thin, phantasmal regions, unlocalized and uninhabited. "Graceless, a Town about two Miles off of Honesty" is *there*; you can find it on the map. And you can live next door to one another in it, and it has houses in which two families live under the same roof. And again the consummate naturalness of the dialogue carries conviction with it. No abstractions ever born could achieve that vivid, idiomatic raciness, and stay abstract. Their blood is nourished on English beef and ale, and they learned to talk in village inns and along the country lanes.

GREATHEART. *Well said*, Father Honest, *quoth the Guide, for by this I know thou art a Cock of the right kind. . . . Well, now we are so happily met, pray let me crave your Name, and the name of the Place you come from.*

HON. My Name I cannot, but I came from the Town of *Stupidity*; it lieth about four Degrees beyond the City of *Destruction.*

GREATHEART. *Oh! Are you that Countryman then? I deem I have half a guess of you, your name is old* Honesty, *is it not?* So the old Gentleman blushed, and said, Not Honesty in the *abstract*, but *Honest* is my Name, and I wish that my *Nature* shall agree to what I am called.

Once more, these immortal rustics and soldiers and citizens of little towns are no conventional puppets of an allegory. Is Mr. Feeble-mind, who was the nephew of Mr. Fearing, a marionette? "He

was mine Uncle, my Father's Brother; he and I have been much of a Temper, he was a little shorter than I, but yet we were much of a Complexion." And so close is the resemblance that Mr. Honest sees it: "You have his whitely Look, a Cast like his with your Eye, and your Speech is much alike." And that "very brisk Lad" whose name was Ignorance, and who came down "a little crooked Lane into the way in which the Pilgrims walked," is no abstraction; nor is Mr. Talkative, who was the son of one Saywell, and dwelt in Prating-row, and was "a very pretty man"—"a tall Man, and something more comely at a distance than at hand"; nor are the three friends of Mr. By-ends, who, being "a Gentleman of good Quality," made them "a very low *Congee*"—"men that Mr. *By-ends* had formerly been acquainted with; for in their minority they were schoolfellow, and were taught by one Mr. *Gripe-man*, a Schoolmaster in *Love-gain*, which is a market town in the County of *Coveting* in the North"; nor is that "very arch Fellow," Mr. By-ends himself, the flower of them all. But for me, I confess, the most engaging of the company is that quartet of truants from a nursery-tale, who slip unheralded and undescribed across the narrative and disappear—"a young Woman her name was *Dull*," who abandoned the narrow path with Short-wind and Slow-pace and Sleepy-head.

There are bits here and there that are worthy of

the contemporary comedy of manners—scenes like the party at the house of Mrs. Timorous, where Mrs. Bats-eyes, Mrs. Inconsiderate, Mrs. Light-mind, and Mrs. Know-nothing meet to discuss Christiana's setting out for the Celestial City, and where Mrs. Light-mind, bored to death with serious discourse, launches into a piquant account of the dance the day before at Madame Wanton's, where, with Mrs. Filth and Mr. Lechery, they were "as merry as the Maids." There is talk which might have fallen from the lips of Joseph Poorgrass or Thomas Leaf:

> Then said the poor man, I am a sickly man, as you see. . . . I am a man of no strength at all of Body, nor yet of Mind. . . . I am, as you see, but of a *feeble Mind*. . . . I am a very ignorant Christian man.

Old Honest, at once bluff and mellow, consistently and delightfully in character, the most individual of all the pilgrims, is somebody of whom Fielding or Trollope, had either of them conceived him, might be proud. And English fiction can show few triumphs of characterization which outshine Mr. Great-heart's epitome of Mr. Fearing's pilgrimage. William Vaughan Moody was right: "*The Pilgrim's Progress* was in a very deep sense the first English novel. It sprang racy of the soil: it had its root in daily fact, and drew its sap from the immediately human."

And that soil was the soil of Bunyan's own Bed-

fordshire, and the facts were the facts of his intimate knowledge. The setting of the allegory is as true to life as are the characters, and the more one knows of seventeenth-century England, the more one marvels at its verisimilitude. The stately English country houses of which the House called Beautiful is the glorified counterpart; the roadside inns; the roads themselves, with their miry sloughs and lurking highwaymen; the crowded fairs of the market towns, laid out in rows and streets; the spectacle of men shut up in an iron cage; the unjust judges and packed juries—there is none of these of which Bunyan had not had direct experience. Sometimes his use of contemporary incident lacks little of being a sheer transcript of reality, as in that lively anecdote which Christian tells (apropos of "a very dark Lane" which he and Hopeful happened to be passing) of Little-Faith's adventure with the three robbers at the point where Dead-man's Lane comes down from Broad-way-gate. Turn the pages, sometime, of that most engrossing and improper volume, Captain Charles Johnson's *Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers, etc. . . . Interspersed with several diverting Tales, and pleasant Songs*, and read the careers of such notorious rogues of Bunyan's day as Claude du Vall, The Golden Farmer, Old Mobb, Mul-sack, Thomas Dun, born between Elstow and Kempston, Jacob Halsey, the son of a Quaker family in Bedford, and you will cherish no doubt that Christian's tale

rehearsed an actual occurrence. But oftener, the setting is not so much a transcript as it is a transformation of reality; as when this or that bit of Bedfordshire landscape all at once *shines*, with that peculiar detached brightness which belongs to familiar objects seen mirrored in a convex glass, or remembered after a vivid dream. And again and again, as in those rapturous passages through which peal Bunyan's long forgone but still beloved bells, one feels the heightening touch of personal experience.

Even the giants and hobgoblins, and the monster with wings like a dragon and scales like a fish are true, in a different but very real sense, to that experience. They are true, in a word, to that immemorial world of wonder and terror which still lives and has lived for uncounted centuries, as reality, in simple and unlettered minds. In his childhood it had " scared and affrighted " Bunyan, waking and in dreams, " with the apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits." One still feels it, as I have said, as a dimly lurking background in *Grace Abounding*, and in *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan, now with complete detachment, employs it with deliberate art. The devils and the fiends had merged, too, with other ingredients. The fascinating story of the strange survivals in Bunyan's century of the disintegrated elements of the great romances is far too long for even the briefest summary here. Sir Charles Firth, in the best introduction to

The Pilgrim's Progress ever written, was the first to recognize its purport, and on that hint Professor Harold Golder, ransacking the varied lore into which the splendid cycles of romance had broken down, has shown how Bunyan's mind was permeated by the atmosphere and stored with the incidents of the chivalric tales which, on his own testimony, he had read or heard. And man-eating giants and fire-breathing dragons blend in the allegory, as they blended in his mind, with that known and familiar landscape which had once for him been peopled with far more dreadful presences.

But in *The Pilgrim's Progress* the giants and the dragons are but the means of calling forth the staunch and steadfast and great-hearted qualities of living men. And nothing in the allegory gives with such finality the illusion of simple, hearty, native flesh and blood, as does its speech, which, like the rest, is racy of the English soil. There is nothing abstract or allegorical in its occasional robust inelegance. Christiana and the children, after panting up the hill Difficulty "were all in a pelting heat." Through the "dirt and slabbiness" of the Enchanted Ground, with "grunting and puffing . . . they made a pretty good shift to wag along." From the smoke of the Pit in the Valley, "behold great stinks and loathesome smells." When Pliable fell into the Slough of Despond, "he was soundly bedabbled with that kind of dirt." That is one side of the shield; here is the

other. Christiana and Mercy are at the House called Beautiful:

MERCY. Hark, don't you hear a Noise?
CHRIS. Yes, 'tis as I believe, a Noise of Musick, for joy that we are here.
MERCY. Wonderful! Musick in the House, Musick in the Heart, and Musick also in Heaven, for joy that we are here.

I shall add no words, even of Bunyan's, to mar that loveliness.

Without, then, ever losing its simplicity or its fresh and vigorous idiomatic virtue, Bunyan's language is an instrument of many stops. I do not believe that its flexibility as a medium of characterization has ever been sufficiently observed. Mr. By-ends uses to perfection the smug lingo of the leading citizen of a provincial town; old Honest's talk is as forthright and as reticently warm-hearted as that amiable personage himself; Mr. Feeble-mind's doting garrulousness is done to the life; Mr. Great-heart talks plain soldier:

Then said Mr. *Great-heart* to Mr. *Valiant-for-truth* (for he loved one greatly that he found to be a man of his Hands), *Thou hast worthily behaved thyself; let me see thy Sword.* So he shewed it him. When he had taken it in his Hand, and looked thereon a while, he said, Ha! *It is a right* Jerusalem *Blade.*

And it was Mr. Great-heart who said of Christian and Faithful:

But what do we talk of them, they were a couple of Lion-like men; they had set their Faces like Flint.

But for consummate truth to nature there are few things of its sort which rival this:

Thus they went on till they came to about the middle of the Valley, and then *Christiana* said, Methinks I see something yonder upon the Road before us, a thing of such a shape such as I have not seen. Then said *Joseph*, Mother, what is it? An ugly thing, Child; an ugly thing, said she. But Mother, what is it like, said he? 'Tis like I cannot tell what, said she. And now it was but a little way off. Then said she, it is nigh.

Well, well, said Mr. *Great-heart*, let them that are most afraid keep close to me. So the *Fiend* came on.

The economy of effort with which the tense, hushed dialogue between the mother and the child leads up to that inimitably indulgent and benign reassurance, and the utter simplicity and commonplaceness of every word, are Bunyan when his art is one with nature. And one reason why, instead of shunning his *dramatis personæ* as dull abstractions, we find ourselves hobnobbing with them as old friends, lies in the fact that we hear them talking, not with the devastating monotony of creatures who must be always honest, or hopeful, or pliable, or what not, but in different fashions under different moods —even as you and I. Mercy, whose exquisite words in the House called Beautiful we have already

heard, speaks once more in perfect character in the Valley of Humiliation:

Then said *Mercy*, I think I am as well in this Valley, as I have been anywhere else in all our Journey. The place methinks suits with my Spirit. I love to be in such places where there is no rattling with Coaches, nor rumbling with Wheels. . . . Here one may think, and break at Heart, and melt in one's Spirit until one's Eyes become like the *Fish Pools of Heshbon.*

But even the gentle Mercy can blaze out like a woman of the Revolution, so that one feels in her words a different timbre, and the very rhythm of her speech takes on a quickened gait. "No, no," she cries, when she sees the bodies of Simple and Sloth and Presumption hanging:

No, no, let them hang, and their Names Rot, and their Crimes live forever against them. I think it a high favour that they were hanged afore we came hither, who knows else what they might a done to such poor women as we are? Then she turned it into a Song, saying,

Now then you three, hang there and be a Sign
To all that shall against the Truth combine.

So Deborah—but with a magnificence beyond Mercy's reach—sang of the dead Sisera.

In a word, when Bunyan is at his best—and that is in the lively give and take along the road—like every born novelist or dramatist, he is inside his characters' skins. And his diction takes its colour and its pattern, not from the conventions of some

allegorical exemplar, but from what goes on under given conditions in the brain which for the nonce he inhabits. Which is only to say again that in certain supreme essentials *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not far from the kingdom of great fiction.

And quite apart from its dramatic fitness, the diction of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is in itself a perennial delight. I have said nothing of *The Holy War*, and *Mr. Bad-man*, and *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, and *A Few Sighs from Hell*, and *The Heavenly Footman*, and the delightful *Book for Boys and Girls*. They are all of a piece, however, in one respect. The same vivid, pithy, homespun diction, especially in narrative and dialogue, weaves the texture of them all. It is the speech to which Bunyan was born and bred—the unlettered language of the youths who played with him at cat, and of the cottagers and the tinkers and the small tradesfolk whom he knew in Elstow, and under the hedgerows, and on the ale-bench at village inns. That in his later years he read much more widely than is commonly supposed, I have myself no doubt. But one of the happiest accidents for English letters was the fact that this reading came too late to sap the vigour of a diction and an idiom which drew their freshness from the native springs of English speech. And happier still is the further fact that the one book which Bunyan knew until his mind was saturated with its phraseology, was the English Bible. Add genius to that unique conjunction, and the phraseo-

logy of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, so far as such miracles are susceptible of explanation, stands explained.

I have said nothing of the deep spiritual sincerity of the allegory, and I shall say but little now. It is the supreme source of the book's immortality, but its beauty is best served by reticence. It is enough that in the central embodiment of that sincerity, the story is still true to life. For behind the person of Christian stands the lovable figure of Bunyan himself. One so often wishes that in the allegories the good died young. Their irritating faultlessness is sometimes more than frailer clay can bear. But Christian, like the rest of us, is a faulty, blundering, struggling mortal—despairing, yet doggedly pressing on; afraid, yet fighting like a lion; forgetful, inattentive, easily deceived, retracing painfully false steps—and then, once more, face forward to the goal. He is Mr. Feeble-mind and Mr. Fearing and Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he is also Mr. Great-heart and Mr. Standfast and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. Had *The Pilgrim's Progress* nothing else than that one great personality to offer, it would still be a book that the world would not willingly let die.

THE NOBLEST MONUMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

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I HAVE deliberately refrained from naming in my title the masterpiece to which my descriptive phrase applies, because I wish to leave no question of the one and only aspect of a rich and complex subject which I mean to treat. For the monument of English prose to be considered is the King James version of the Bible. Of its unique significance in the field of English letters there can be no doubt. Its phraseology has become part and parcel of our common tongue—bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. Its rhythms and cadences, its turns of speech, its familiar imagery, its very words, are woven into the texture of our literature, prose and poetry alike. Yet it is of the Orient, we of the West; it is a translation, not an original; and it has reached us by way, not of one language only, but of three. What is it, then, in this translation, which has made it a factor of such power in the development of our speech? What are the qualities which have stamped indelibly its very phraseology upon the literary masterpieces of 300 years? What, in particular, is the nature of the long evolution through which the noble vehicle of a great and deeply significant literature clothed itself at last

in English words? Those, and those alone, are the questions which I shall try in part to answer.

Consider for a moment (to deal with the obvious first) our own familiar, everyday speech—the apt and telling turns of expression, the phrases of homely vigour or happy pregnancy which have become a part of our linguistic stock in trade. "Highways and hedges," " hip and thigh," " arose as one man," " lick the dust," " a thorn in the flesh," " a broken reed," " the root of all evil," " the nether millstone," " the sweat of his brow," " heap coals of fire," " a soft answer," " a word in season," " weighed and found wanting," " we are the people "—that is a list of Biblical phrases cited in a recent volume, and most of us could double it or treble it at will. The English of the Bible has a pithiness and raciness, a homely tang, a terse sententiousness, an idiomatic flavour which comes home to men's business and bosoms. And among the qualities which a saturation in the Bible has always lent to English style is a happiness of incidental phrase and a swift tellingness of diction which only a similar saturation in Shakespeare can approach in its effectiveness.

But the influence of the English of the Bible is deeper and more pervasive far than that. And it is another aspect of this influence of which I wish particularly to speak. For the Biblical style is characterized not merely by homely vigour and pithiness of phrase, but also by a singular nobility

of diction and by a rhythmic quality which is, I think, unrivalled in its beauty. And I know no better way of reaching an understanding of the unique position which the King James version of the Bible occupies as a monument of prose than an attempt to reach the secret of its diction and its rhythms. And that, with no pretence of completeness, is what I mean to do.

I

It is not too much to say, I think, that the language of the English Bible owes its distinctive qualities, and that perhaps in no unequal measure, on the one hand to the vast desert spaces and wide skies of the hither Orient, and on the other to the open seas and rock-bound coasts of England. Nor do I mean that in the least as a mere figure of speech. For at the beginning of the long chain of development which makes the very language of the English Bible what it is are the men who, beside the rivers of Babylon and Egypt, or among the hills and pasture lands of Israel and Judah, or in the wide stillness of Arabia, brooded and wondered and dreamed, and left a language simple and sensuous and steeped in the picturesque imagery of what they saw and felt. At the end of this same chain of causes are the theatres of Shakespeare's London and the ships of the Elizabethan voyagers—of men

whose language was as virile and as vivid as their lives. And between are the seventy at Alexandria and Jerome in his desert—Greece and Rome between Mesopotamia and England. How did the elements fuse?

Once more let me repeat, we are concerned with a *translation.* Now there are certain things which are notoriously untranslatable.

> Not poppy nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dest yesterday.

Some of you will recall a striking passage in which Dr. Furness takes those lines and points out, word by word, the utter impossibility of reproducing their distinctive music or their subtle connotations in any other language without irreparable loss. The very essence of a piece of literature—its breath and finer spirit—is apt to evaporate in the passage from one language to another, so intimate is the union between the nicer shades of thought and feeling and the delicate, evanescent associations of words. But now we reach the first element in our analysis. For Hebrew was a supremely translatable tongue, and it was so, in large degree, because of certain qualities of its vocabulary, which concern us closely here.

I spoke a moment ago—borrowing the words from Milton's famous phrase about poetry—of the Hebrew vocabulary as "simple and sensuous."

Let me be a little more explicit, and turn first to English for what my pedagogical friends would call an "apperceptive basis." Everybody knows that most of the words we use to-day to express intellectual, emotional, spiritual concepts had originally physical significance. "Wrong," for example, primarily implied something twisted; "implied" itself involves the idea of something folded within another thing—as "involve" (to use what chance supplies!) rests on the concept of something rolled or wrapped about. "Concept" itself, so considered, goes back to the notion of seizing or grasping; to "consider," in turn, was at first to gaze attentively upon the stars; "attentively," again, rests ultimately upon the idea of physical stretching—and so one might go on *ad libitum*. But with us these vivid physical implications of the words we use have all become attenuated, they have faded out. We no longer are conscious of their primitive, more concrete meaning; we should be not a little checked and disconcerted in our thinking if we were. In Hebrew, on the other hand, the vocabulary was consciously pictorial and concrete in its character. That which distinguishes the Semitic languages from the Aryan, says Renan, is the fact that "this primitive union of sensation and idea persists—so that in each word one still hears the echo of the primitive sensations which determined the choice of the first makers of the language." The writers of the Old Testament—and to a less degree those of

the New as well—thought and felt and spoke in images—in a vocabulary compact of nearly all the physical sensations that flesh is heir to. "Paul's words," said Luther, "are alive; they have hands and feet; if you cut them they bleed." He might have said that with no less fitness of the Hebrew words.

Now this characteristic of the Hebrew vocabulary carries certain consequences which are pertinent to this discussion. In the first place, it gave to the diction of Hebrew literature an incomparable vividness. Thereis a famous passage in *Diana of the Crossways* in which Meredith speaks of the art of description: "The art of the pen," he says, "is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a Drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. That is why the poets, *who spring imagination with a word or phrase*, paint lasting pictures." Well, to a degree unapproached, perhaps, unless it be in Shakespeare or in Dante, the Hebrew writers "spring imagination with a word or phrase." Their very words carry out Browning's curt injunction: "do the thing shall breed the thought." Instead of merely naming an emotion, they reproduce the physical sensation that attends it—the surging of blood to the face, the tingling of the nerves, the rising of the hair, the palsy of the tongue, the quickening of the breath.

"O God, thou art my God . . . *my soul thirsteth* for thee, *my flesh longeth* for thee, in a dry and thirsty land

where no water is "; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so *panteth* my soul after thee "; "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little *folding of the hands* to sleep "; "As the door *turneth upon his hinges*, so doth the slothful upon his bed "; "Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, *a shaking of the head* among the people "; "We walk in darkness, *we grope for the wall* like the blind "; "I am weary of my crying: *my throat is dried*: *mine eyes fail* while I wait for my God."

It would be easy to read such passages endlessly; these are enough to show to what degree the Biblical vocabulary is compact of the primal stuff of our common humanity—of its universal emotional, sensory experiences. The meaning of the Hebrew words is "carried"—in Wordsworth's phrase—"alive into the heart."

Moreover, this same simple and sensuous quality shows itself in another way—in the inexpugnable racial tendency of the Hebrew mind to express not only emotions, but ideas, in apt and telling imagery. Poet and prophet and chronicler alike thought as well as felt in terms of what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and their hands handled. The large and simple and permanent objects and elements of life—the eternal hills, the treasures of the snow, rain coming down upon mown grass, winds and all weathers, the rock in the desert, still waters in pasture lands and the sea that roars and is troubled, sleep and the fleetingness of dreams—all the peren-

nial, elemental processes of nature, all the changing yet abiding physiognomy of earth and sky were charged to their brooding eye with spiritual significance, and woven into the very texture of their speech.

"And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"; "Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; thy judgments are a great deep"; "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth"; "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep"; "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image"; "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, my soul is with me like a weaned child"; "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it"; "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Utter simplicity, limpid clearness, the vividness of direct, authentic vision—these are the salient qualities of the diction of the men who wrote the Bible.

Now let me return to what was said a few mo-

ments ago. The Hebrew of the Old Testament (and to a less degree the Greek of the New) is supremely translatable, and it is so largely because of just these salient characteristics of its diction—its simplicity, its clarity, its directness, and its universal and immediate appeal. And that brings us to another aspect of the subject. For it is the translation into English with which we have to do. And as regards possession of these same qualities, the English vocabulary, as it happens, can meet the Hebrew upon equal terms.

There are in the English vocabulary, as everybody knows, two chief elements—the one native, the other complexly foreign. And it is the fusion of these two which constitutes the unrivalled flexibility and variety of our speech. To its native, Saxon element it owes a homely vigour, a forthrightness and vividness and concreteness, an emotional appeal, in which it matches the Hebrew itself. To its foreign element—chiefly the Latin component, which will concern us in a moment—is due, among other things, a sonorousness, a stateliness, a richness of music, a capacity for delicate discrimination which makes it an instrument of almost endlessly varied stops. Now one element is predominant, now the other; more frequently there is an intimate fusion of the two. Every page of English literature, whether prose or poetry, illustrates the possibilities of infinite variety inherent in this fundamental character of English diction; but it is its bearing in

the translation of the Bible which concerns us now, and to that I pass at once.

For reasons too complex and far-reaching for discussion here, the language at the period during which the Bible was being translated into English was in its most plastic stage. It was a time of intense living, of incomparable zest in life. England was literally, in Milton's words, "a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks." Without being too crassly figurative one may put the thing in Biblical phrase: "The winter was past, the rain was over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds had come." This is no place to linger on the glory of those spacious days. The one thing which I wish to emphasize is this: with the new quickening of every phase of life, the language itself kept even pace. There was a fresh consciousness of its possibilities, a sovereign and masterful exploitation of its hitherto undreamed resources. For the Elizabethans dealt with their speech as they dealt with life—with an adventurous zest in exacting from it all it had to give. "The lady shall speak her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't," says Hamlet to the players—and to say its mind freely, to the top of its bent, this particular period proposed; and if the language cabined, cribbed, confined it—why, then, the language must expand! And expand it did, with palpable growing pains now and then, but with an ultimate gain

in freshness, in vividness, in raciness, in flexibility which it has never wholly lost. And so far as their medium was concerned, the King James translators fell upon lucky days.

They had at their disposal, then, on its Saxon side, a vocabulary scarcely less concrete and vivid than that of the Hebrew itself. Here is a paragraph from a book printed a hundred years before Shakespeare began to write, but widely read in Shakespeare's day—Malory's *Morte D'arthur*:

> And as the king lay in his cabin in the ship, he fell in a slumbering, and dreamed a marvellous dream: him seemed that a dreadful dragon did drown much of his people, and he came flying out of the west, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of a marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable, and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land and water had flamed all of fire. After him seemed there came out of the orient a grimly boar all black in a cloud, and his paws as big as a post; he was rugged looking roughly, he was the foulest beast that ever man saw, he roared and romed so hideously that it were marvel to hear. Then the dreadful dragon advanced him, and came in the wind like a falcon, giving great strokes on the boar, and the boar hit him again with his grisly tusks that his breast was all bloody, and that the hot blood made all the sea red of his blood. Then the dragon flew away all on an height, and came down with such a swough, and smote the boar on the ridge, which was ten foot

large from the head to the tail, and smote the boar all to powder, both flesh and bones, that it flittered all abroad on the sea.

There is no lack in that diction of vigour, of concreteness, of picturing power! And when the translators of the Bible came to their task, they found a medium ready to their hand:

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

Or take another passage from Malory, and one from the Bible again.

Ah, Launcelot, he said, thou were head of all christian knights; and now I dare say, said Sir Ector, thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knights' hand; and thou were the courtiest knight that ever bare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of

knights; and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.

Now hear the other:

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! . . . From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

There is in the translation from the Hebrew a majestic rhythm, of which I shall speak later, and which the prose of Malory lacks; but the two agree in the simplicity and the directness of their diction. And those qualities of the native element of English have met and merged with similar, often identical, qualities of the original. For no less than the Hebrew, the native English is the language of the eye, the hand, the heart, and one of the supreme merits of the Jacobean translators is their sense of that fundamental fact. Let me choose three other brief passages to make still clearer what I mean:

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

There are no nobler passages in English prose. And out of the 144 words that I have just read, only ten are not of native origin. And the far-reaching and pervasive influence of the King James version of the Bible upon English style is very largely due to this happy coincidence of qualities in two languages in other respects as far apart as the East is from the West.

But simplicity is not the only quality of the diction of the King James version. It has majesty and stateliness as well. And that lofty grandeur of the diction of the English Bible is due in large degree to still another remarkable convergence of kindred qualities in two otherwise alien tongues. For centuries the ear of English-speaking people had been

attuned to the sonorous diction of the service of the church—to the majestic Latin of its offices and of its hymns. And for sheer splendour of verbal music the Latin of the Church—if I may express my own opinion—has never been surpassed. Let me read a brief passage from the lines of Bernard of Cluny on which the familiar hymn "Jerusalem the Golden" is based:

Urbs Sion aurea, patria lactea, cive decora,
Omne cor obruis, omnibus obstruis et cor et ora.
Nescio, nescio, quae jubilatio, lux tibi qualis,
Quam socialia gaudia, gloria quam specialis. . . .
Urbs Sion inclyta, turris et edita littore tuto,
Te peto, te colo, te flagro, te volo, canto, saluto . . .
O bona patria, num tua gaudia teque videbo?
O bona patria, num tua praemia plena tenebo? . . .
Pax ibi florida, pascua vivida, viva medulla,
Nulla molestia, nulla tragœdia, lacryma nulla.
O sacra potio, sacra refectio, pax animarum,
O pius, O bonus, O placidus sonus, hymnus earum.

Or listen to the clangor of this:

Mortis portis fractis, fortis
Fortior vim sustulit;
Et per crucem regem trucem
Infernorum perculit.
Lumen clarum tenebrarum
Sedibus resplenduit;
Dum salvare, recreare,
Quod creavit, voluit.

Or to the mellower music of this—from the original of the hymn we know as "Jesus, the very thought of thee":

Jesu, dulcis memoria
Dans vera cordis gaudia,
Sed super mel et omnia
Eius dulcis praesentia. . . .

Jesu, dulcedo cordium,
Fons vivus, lumen mentium,
Excedens omne gaudium,
Et omne desiderium. . . .

Mane nobiscum, Domine,
Et nos illustra lumine,
Pulsa noctis caligine
Mundum replens dulcedine.

I have read these because I want to make at least reasonably clear the sort of thing that had trained the ear, and had become through generations part and parcel of the subconscious possession of those who listened, even without understanding, to the service of the church. And it was in the majestic Latin of the Vulgate that the Bible, in that service, for centuries was heard. And the sonorousness of the Latin, no less than the simplicity of the Hebrew, found in English its apt and adequate vehicle. For through its enormous Latin element the English vocabulary had become an instrument

capable of scarcely less stately harmonies than Latin itself. And so, in the King James Bible, we find the plangent organ music of passages like these:

> And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. . . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
>
> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
>
> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

In a word, the supreme qualities of two vocabularies—the Hebrew of the writers of the Bible, and the Latin of its most influential version—found their counterpart in English; and to this complex

of correspondences is largely due the marvellous felicity of diction which has made the English Bible a potent factor in the ennobling of the English speech.

But the bare fact of the adaptability of the language is not enough in itself to account for the surpassing beauty of the diction of the King James version. All harmonies (to indulge in a platitude) are latent in the complex mechanism of an organ, but a master's hand is necessary to evoke them. And the existence of a rich and supple medium of expression is not alone enough to make a masterpiece—or even to preclude monstrosities. There is something else which must come into the reckoning. What kept, for example, the Jacobean translators from perpetrating such a prodigy of unbridled diction as Stanyhurst's attempt to render Virgil, printed only thirty years before? Here are a few lines of that ill-starred performance:

And thus as he mused, with tears Venus heauye beblubberd
Prest foorth in presence, and whimpring framed her errand.
O God most pusiaunt, whose mighty auctoritye lasting
Ruls gods, and mankind skeareth with thunderus humbling:
What syn hath Aeneas, my brat, committed agaynst the? . . .

Here is another sample:

For the unsauerye rakhel with collops bludred yfrancked,
With chuffe chaffe wynesops lyke a gourd bourrachoe replennisht,
His nodil in crossewise wresting downe droups to the growndward,
In belche galp vometing with dead sleape snortye the collops,
Raw with wyne soused, we doe pray toe supernal assemblye,
Round with al embaying thee muffe maffe loller.

That is what became of the beauteous majesty of Virgil under one of the linguistic tendencies of the day. What saved the translation of the Bible from similar disfigurement? Or what kept it from such ridiculous excess as marks the pages of half the fashionable, courtly writing of the period, as one finds it, for example, in a book whose very title is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the vogue: "A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure Containing Many Pretie Histories by him set forth in Comely Colours and most Delightfully Discoursed"—in the very first story of which we are to see "a marvellous mirror of blessed matrimony, and a terrible type of beastly tyranny"? That painful situation comes about, we are told, because "this Sinorix, glancing his gazing eyes on the blazing beauty of Camma, received so deep an impression of her perfection in his heart, that immediately he fixed his fancy upon her comely corps." Men were freely indulging in

that amazing jargon while the translation of the Bible was under way. What conserved against such influences its unfailing dignity and exquisite felicity of word and phrase? The causes, I think, were chiefly two.

The one is, of course, the loftiness and beauty of the original itself, which tended, through its own compelling influence, to exercise a check upon linguistic eccentricities. But even the depth and beauty of the original, potent a factor as admittedly it was, is not sufficient to account for the freedom of the King James version from disfiguring elements. For there have been notoriously queer translations of this same beautiful original. The noble simplicity of the twenty-third Psalm did not deter Simon Patrick, Lord Bishop of Chichester, who during the 1680's paraphrased both the Psalms and the Song of Songs, from the exercise of his own peculiar gifts. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters;" that is the second verse as we have it in the King James version. And this is Patrick's paraphrase: "For as a good Shepherd leads his Sheep in the violent Heat to shady Places, where they may lie down and feed (not in parched, but) in fresh and green Pastures; and in the Evening leads them (not to muddy and troubled Waters, but) to pure and quiet streams: so hath he already made a fair and plentiful Provision for me; which I enjoy in Peace without any disturbance." Here, again, is one of the lyric cries of the Song of Songs, as the Jacobean

translators rendered it: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." And this is Simon Patrick's version of the same: "So I turned myself to those of my Neighbours and familiar Acquaintance, who were awakened by my cries to come and see what the matter was; and conjured them, as they would answer it to God, that if they met with my Beloved, they would let Him know—what shall I say?—what shall I desire you to tell Him? but that I do not enjoy myself, now that I want his Company nor can be well, till I recover his love again."—"Whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" If ever the beauty of Israel was slain upon its high places, it was when Simon Patrick took pen in hand as an improver of the Bible! Even the Rheims version, on which the King James translators drew for some of their happiest renderings, was capable of such vagaries as "Give us to day our supersubstantial bread," or "Beneficence and communication do not forget, for with such hosets God is promerited;" while for the great Jacobean phrase "the deep things of God" the Rhemish translators read "the *profundities* of God." Obviously even the influence of the great original was not sufficient to hold in check the eccentricities of individual translators. The reason for the transcendent merits of the prose diction of the King James version is found, in large measure, in another fact.

That fact is this. The "Authorized" Version

represents a slow, almost impersonal evolution. For it is, in reality, itself a revision, resting upon earlier versions, and these, in turn, depend in varying degrees upon each other, so that through the gradual exercise of something which approaches natural selection, there has come about, in both diction and phraseology, a true survival of the fittest. For the earliest vernacular version in English we must go back to Wycliffe and his followers, in Chaucer's day. But the immediate development with which we are concerned begins with Tyndale, the first part of whose translation appeared in 1525, almost a century before the Jacobean version saw the light. Following Tyndale's translation, at intervals through the sixteenth century, came five others. In 1535 appeared Coverdale's Bible, a revision of Tyndale, with the help of the Swiss-German version of 1524-29, and also of Luther's vivid and idiomatic rendering. Next came Matthew's Bible (edited, chiefly from Tyndale, by that John Rogers with whose martyrdom the New England Primer has made us all familiar), and then, in 1539, the Great Bible, revised by Coverdale from Matthew's Bible. In 1560 the Protestants exiled under Mary made at Geneva a version, known as the Geneva Bible, based more closely than the others on the original, but powerfully influenced still by the work of Tyndale and Coverdale. In 1568 was published the Bishops' Bible—itself a revision of the Great Bible, with the aid of the Geneva version—which,

in turn, formed the ostensible basis of the King James version. And entering the current to a slight degree is also the Rhemish Bible, the English translation made by the Romanists during the 'eighties of the sixteenth century.

The style of the King James version then is, as I have said, an evolution. It rests in the first instance upon the translation of John Tyndale; but it is, in the end, the resultant of a long selective process, of a winnowing of words that lasted almost a century. Tyndale's own diction was singularly simple, energetic, nervous, and yet restrained; the closing years of the sixteenth century were, as we have seen, a period of vivid and fresh and plastic speech; and the long process of impersonal selection, through the influence of version upon version, served (to use Dante's phrase) as "a sieve for noble words." And through the influence of the diction which emerged at last from that complex interplay of varied forces, the current of our speech has been enriched by

> Words that have drawn transcendent meanings up
> From the best passion of all by-gone time,
> Steeped through with tears of triumph and remorse,
> Sweet with all sainthood, cleansed in martyr-fires.

Those lines of Lowell's are literally true. And they lead us at once, with their recognition of an undertone of profound emotion which pervades the history, to another aspect of the subject. For

the prose of the Jacobean version is magnificently rhythmic, and its rhythms represent an evolution too.

II

The language of elevated thought or feeling is always rhythmic. Strong feeling of whatever sort, that is, imposes upon speech a rhythmic beat. Even you and I, whose ordinary daily talk maintains its slow or hurried, nervous or phlegmatic, staccato or legato, but always pedestrian gait—even you and I, under stress of compelling emotion find our speech taking on not only deeper colour, but a more or less measured and inevitable beat. That rhythm is not the rhythm of verse; it is infinitely more varied, less susceptible of formulation, ebbing and flowing—sometimes even surging, pulsing, throbbing—with the systole and diastole of the emotion, controlled or unrestrained, which gives it birth. And it is that heightening of rhythmic quality, whenever thought is deeply tinged with feeling, that characterizes elevated, as over against purely expository, prose.

Now the Biblical literature, to an almost unrivalled degree, is profoundly tinged with feeling. Racial bent, no less than the drama of their history, led the writers of the Bible to a strongly felt rather than closely reasoned envisagement of life. Caught as their little country was between the upper and

nether millstones of the great empires to the north and to the south, mere puppets as they were between the fell incensed points of mighty opposites, the Jewish race faced a terrible enigma, and the great literature of the Exile is little else than a passionate attempt to solve what seemed to be an inexplicable riddle—the mysterious ways of God with men. The Old Testament writings, in the form in which we have them now, date in large measure from that period of stress, and the tragic problem of continued national existence merged—once more in the minds of prophets and poets and chroniclers alike—with the no less tragic spiritual problem of God's enigmatic dealings with his chosen race. No people, perhaps, so deeply felt the burthen of the mystery, the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world, as did the Jews; and no literature, I think, is so pervaded with profound and passionate emotion as the writings of the Old and the New Testaments.

Nor is that all. There is again a strange and significant parallel. For the century during which the English translation slowly grew, was also a period of great spiritual stress. Tyndale's heroic life ended in martyrdom; John Rogers died at the stake; none of the earlier translators counted their lives dear unto themselves. Translation and original alike came through the furnace, and those who first wrote and those who last rendered were inspired by an intensity of feeling which found in-

evitable expression, among other ways, in the very cadences of their speech. For the prose of the King James version is not rhythmic without cause. We are dealing, as in the matter of the diction, with a development, and the very mould in which the familiar words are cast—the actual rhythms of the majestic English prose which we have just read—are what they are through influences active for centuries before the Jacobean translators were born.

One of those influences lay in the very nature of Hebrew poetry itself, the formative principle of which, as everybody knows, was what has been called "the rhythm of meaning"—a parallelism of thought, as well as of form, which was susceptible of infinite variety. "'The rapid stroke as of alternate wings,'" says Dean Stanley, in a well-known passage, "'the heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart,' which have been beautifully described as the essence of the parallel structure of Hebrew verse, are exactly suited for the endless play of human feeling, and for the understanding of every age and nation." And again, as in the case of the diction, we have to observe a peculiar circumstance. Poetic rhythms, as a rule, are incorrigibly untranslatable; the luckless fate of innumerable "translations in the metres of the original" bears eloquent witness to that mournful truth. But here was a rhythm dependent upon an inner impulse rather than upon external rule—ebbing and flowing, rising and falling with the fluctua-

tions of thought or mood, and carrying, through its powerful beat, the impelling emotion into the reader's mind, to stir in turn the springs of rhythm there. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translators of the Bible were happily untroubled by pedantic theories of the technique of Hebrew verse; what they felt was this deep inner rhythm—this alternating surge of thought or feeling; and untrammelled by any attempt to reproduce with technical exactness its outward form, they responded to its inner spirit in a prose whose rhythms, so moulded, have a flexibility, a stateliness, a grand freedom, which even the original does not always share. Sometimes it is a majestic march of rhythms like that of an army with banners:

> Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

Or again, it is precisely that heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart of which Dean Stanley speaks:

> Why died I not from the womb? why did I not

give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master.

Now it is in the exquisite swell of a rhythm to its climax:

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

Again it is the measured beat of passion in restraint, as in that passage which Professor Saintsbury once singled out as the best example known to him of "absolutely perfect English prose"—a passage which I have already read in part for the matchless beauty of its diction:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters

cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Through every one of those passages runs the balanced structure of the Hebrew verse; but it has translated itself into a marvellously rich and varied rhythmic prose which through three centuries—alas! that one should have to add, less potently to-day—has attuned to its harmonies the English ear, and influenced the noblest English style.

I may not speak at length as I wish I might, of the co-operant influence of the majestic rhythms of Jerome's Latin in the Vulgate. As in the case of the diction, so here again there has been an extraordinary interweaving of disparate strands, and the very order of the English words in some of those passages in the King James version which are most stately in their going, is what it is because of the stamp impressed upon the Vulgate by the powerful personality of St. Jerome. It would not be impossible to point out sentences in the King James version in which converge, in the present order of the English words, the turns of expression, under strong emotion, of four men living centuries apart—of some nameless writer of the Exile, and of St. Jerome, John Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale. And you and I echo their dead voices as we read. For not only is the message of the Bible the most profoundly human that was ever penned, but its very form, in the soberest, least sentimental sense, is

compact of "the mighty hopes"—and fears—"that make us men."

I may only mention the way in which, from version to version through the century in which the King James version grew, its prose acquired a deepeningly rhythmic quality. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Compare the cadence of that sentence with the rendering of Wycliffe: "Thei schulen no more hungre nether thirst." The change in the order, and the addition of the two words "any more"—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more"—have touched Wycliffe's words with new and imperishable beauty. The Bishops' Bible reads: "He is suche a man as hath good experience of sorowes and infirmities." The Genevan version changed it to "a man ful of sorows and hath experience of infirmities." It was the King James translators who took the final step to the grave beauty of the perfect wording that we know: "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." More than to any one else it was to John Tyndale that the noblest qualities of the Biblical prose are due. Yet here is even Tyndale's rendering of the opening verses of Genesis: "In the begynnynge God created heaven and erth. The erth was voyde and emptie, and darcknesse was upon the depe, and the spirite of god moved upon the water." That is substantially the version that we know. Yet it lacks the rhythmic grandeur, unobtrusive but pervasive, which the Jacobean

rendering has: " In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." " Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," owes as much to its matchless loveliness of form as it does to the spiritual beauty of its content. If one doubt that, one need only listen to its earliest English rendering: " Alle ye that traueilen, and ben chargid, come to me, and Y schal fulfille you."

One could go on for ever; that is enough, I think, to show that the mould in which the well-known phraseology is cast was no happy accident, but the outcome of movements and tendencies rooted deep in racial and personal experience. And in the response of the last three centuries to that great utterance, which has become, with Milton, the " organ-voice of England," deep has answered to deep again.

TWO READINGS OF EARTH

THE terms of this Lectureship[1] impose upon every lecturer who holds it a significant restriction. Only the *recent*, in literature or science, may, under the deed of gift, afford the theme. But the recent, as such, has a singular attribute. It moves, an eternal fugitive, along an endless track, for ever becoming and, as it becomes, for ever ceasing to be. Every moment, from the Dinosaurs to Darwin, has been recent in its turn, and every vivid one of them is so no more. And behind us, as the wingèd chariot that bears us hurries on, poetry, prose, drama, and the miracles of science which are to-day the latest things, stream back to join that ineluctably receding multitude. For our recent—"nor all our piety nor wit Shall lure it back"—will be the antiquated, ancient, even obsolete to other speakers (soon enough!) upon the no less transitory recent of their day. That is the most exquisite of Time's little ironies—this synchronous recession and progression of the present with all its works, as if in some fantastic fashion we were simultaneously backward streaming wake and flying sail. The limitation laid upon these lectures is in effect a peremptory *carpe diem*.

[1] The Francis Bergen Lectures, Yale University.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

Perhaps! But at least the recent will never be recent again—never again can be seen as we alone can see it. And therein lies, I take it, the significance of this Foundation.

I have chosen, then, two Englishmen—one dead since 1909, the other living and still writing at the age of eighty-five [1]—whose pre-eminence among contemporary men of letters will be questioned, I suppose, by few. Both are novelists, both poets; and in both verse has supplemented prose in the expression of a deeply felt philosophy of life for which the more accustomed medium proved inadequate. Both read with peculiarly sensitive vision the face of earth and sky; both read with still more penetrating eye the hidden sense behind the shows; and both have given voice to their readings with superb indifference to conventional acceptances. They have in common a profound sincerity and the gift of looking facts indomitably in the face; in the interpretation of their facts they differ, yet not without significant concurrences. They are both supremely of their time, which still is ours; and I for one believe that both have in them elements of immortality. I have no intention of subjecting them to rigorous critical analysis.

[1] This was written in 1924.

They have seen with a poet's eye, whether writing in prose or in verse, the beauty of earth, and they have striven to discern its meaning. And their readings of earth, as concretely as it is in my power to give them, will constitute the burden of my theme.

I

In the first edition of *Wessex Poems* are incorporated some thirty "rough sketches," as Hardy calls them, each signed with the monogram . Solitary figures black against a sea of light, or outlined against endless space, or walking lonely roads that stretch into infinity; a field of English graves beside a mound that was a Roman amphitheatre, across the pagan edge of which peer tips of Christian spires; a brave little caterpillar line of soldiers; "the wayless wet gray ground of Waterloo"—an empty, shadow-haunted plain in spectral light; a beautiful dead form beneath a winding-sheet; a flaming comet; a broken key—latent in those dozen emblems are the themes which walked like ghosts the corridors of Hardy's brain. But there is one of them which epitomizes him as that poignant little sketch of Blake's—the tiny figure starting up its gossamer stair to grasp the moon, with the legend under it: I WANT, I WANT—is eloquent of Blake. It is the frontispiece to a sequence of four poems entitled *She, to Him*. A vast, dim moor-

land rises against the rim of the world, its skyline cutting the misty radiance of a setting sun, whose streamers are like the spokes of some gigantic cosmic wheel. Up the huge shoulder of the heath winds the white, serpentine line of a road, and down the road, discernible only against its pallor, are moving side by side two shadowy human shapes. The moor is elemental as the frosts and rains that carved it; the road is old as the prehistoric dead whose feet first wore its winding track. And He and She, as Hardy lends us eyes to see them, are woven in one web with dying suns and earth's diurnal sway and ghostly presences.

Now beside that set Egdon Heath, with its "aged highway," and "its sombre stretch of rounds and hollows that seem to rise and meet the evening gloom," and the solitary human figure on its summit, motionless as the immobile earth beneath its feet. That figure, like the two on the slope of the moorland in the sketch, turns at last to go, and Hardy characterizes its descent in ten pregnant words: "it descended . . . *with the glide of a water-drop down a bud*," as if the breathing mortal were co-elemental with insensate things, and one, in its impotence, with their fatality. Read in its context of enormous, brooding presences, that lovely, fate-laden phrase becomes the very epitome of Hardy's irony. For the essence of that irony lies in a pervading sense of the infinitesimal littleness of the human atom in the face of its vast, inanimate, yet

somehow sentient, watching, immanent environment. Hardy's earth, in a word, is a *haunted* place, and if I can make that clear we shall reach in the end, I think, the distinctive element in a daring and powerfully individual conception of the universe.

And first of all, the world as Hardy sees it is, to a degree perhaps unparalleled, a world of the two twilights and of night—a world in which "light thickens," and "good things of day begin to droop and drowse." "The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen"—and everyone knows the Lucretian grandeur with which that theme unfolds throughout the tragedy. But there is the sister twilight, dawn, and that is sentient too. "The whole enormous landscape bore that impress of reserve, taciturnity, and hesitation which is usual just before day. . . . Presently the night wind died out, and the quivering little pools in the cup-like hollows of the stones lay still"—and in another intent, considering twilight another tragedy draws to its close. We move with Hardy at life's crucial moments through a taciturn, brooding, crepuscular world, in which dread things awaited come to pass, as if the waiting and the coming were, through some unconscious power that works through each, one thing. For dawn and twilight are more than the daily roll of earth from light to darkness and

from darkness into light. They are inscrutable potencies and dim sentiences. " In the twilight of the morning light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of evening it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse." That pregnant sentence ushers in the walks through ghostly dawns which wrought their will on Angel Clare and Tess. And page after page is pervaded with the sense of infinite weavings going on as day dies or is born. Michelangelo's Dawn and Twilight, dreaming with strange secrets in their drowsy eyes, are kith and kin to Hardy's disembodied, potent effluences of an earth that hovers between sleep and wake.

But between twilight and dawn night lies over the earth, and night to Hardy is alive with vast, grotesque projections of pigmy human doings against the endless reaches of the world. The upper air is a screen upon which trivial objects throw dilated " phantoms of sublimity." Two, He and She, walk out with a perforated lantern, and " the patterns of the air-holes in the top of the lantern rise to the mist overhead, where they appear of giant size, as if reaching the tent-shaped sky." Another two, at another fated moment, have met by lantern-light, and the lantern standing on the ground betwixt them, and throwing its gleam among the blades of long damp grass " with the effect of a large glowworm . . . radiated upwards into their faces, and sent over half the plantation

gigantic shadows of both man and woman "—shadows that fled, " distorted and mangled upon the tree-trunks, till they wasted to nothing." It is not accidental that these mocking shapes with their fantastic discrepancy between the object and the shadow walk side by side with mortals through the night. The grotesqueries of light and shadow are among the most effective instruments of Hardy's irony. The bonfires on Egdon Heath—the heath down which Eustacia had just glided like a water-drop—work metamorphoses upon both sky and earth. " Tufts of fire . . . glowing scarlet-red from the shade, like wounds in a black hide; Maenades, with winy faces and blown hair," they " tinctured the silent bosom of the clouds above them and lit up their ephemeral caves, which seemed thenceforth to become scalding caldrons." But on the faces of the circumambient earthlings they played more impish tricks. " All was unstable; quivering as leaves, evanescent as lightning. Shadowy eye-sockets, deep as those of a death's head, suddenly turned into pits of lustre; a lantern-jaw was cavernous, then it was shining; wrinkles were emphasized to ravines . . . nostrils were dark wells . . . eyeballs glowed like little lanterns." Night, for Hardy, peoples earth, through its reflections and refractions, with spectral parodies of breathing flesh and blood, as it is night which, in its huge, impassive Immanence, engulfs their pitiful hopes and fears. " The night came in, and took up its place there, uncon-

cerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien." Among all the nights of all the poets there is none to match that terrible, remorseless, tranquil Thing.

Moreover, it is night which stirs in us the consciousness of imperturbable, resistless cosmic energies which hold us, helpless as a drop of water, in their unresting sway. Sometimes at midnight " the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement," and you can " long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars." " Above the dark margin of the earth," as Bathsheba Everdene sat by the wayside, " appeared foreshores and promontories of coppery cloud . . . and the unresting world wheeled her round to a contrasting prospect eastward, in the shape of indecisive and palpitating stars." And down in the Nether Glooms the dead

> . . . hear the axle grind
> Round and round
> Of the great world.

Moreover, in this planetary consciousness of ours the earth itself towers looming over us, or stretches off to the steep brink of space. " The distant rims of the world " are our horizon; the forms about the bonfires on the summit of the heath stand as if

" in some radiant upper storey of the world "; and in the tremendous Third Part of *The Dynasts* the Spirit of the Years who knows the Immanent Will residing at " the Back of Things " asks the Spirit of the Pities:

> Must I again reveal It as It hauls
> The halyards of the world?

Only Lucretius can vie with Hardy in the sombre grandeur of his universe, and the *flammantia moenia mundi* might almost have come from Hardy's pen.

And this sense of the immensities of time and space is wrought into the very fibre of his pondering imagination. The stupendous history of the stellar universe, from scattered haze to nebulous centre and solid mass, is re-enacted in the evolutions of a swarm of bees; the ruddy glow from a kiln mouth shines over the floor " with the streaming horizontality of the setting sun "; the " glistening ripple of gossamer webs " is " like the track of moonlight on the sea." The yearly coming of the frost is thrown against the background of the elemental forces which sweep across the trackless spaces about the turning axle of the world: " after this season . . . came a spell of dry frost, when strange birds from behind the North Pole began to arrive silently on the upland of Flintcomb-Ash; gaunt spectral creatures with tragical eyes—eyes which had witnessed scenes of cataclysmal horror in inaccessible polar regions of a magnitude such

as no human being had ever conceived, in curdling temperatures that no man could endure; which had beheld the crash of icebergs and the slide of snow-hills by the shooting light of the Aurora; been half blinded by the whirl of colossal storms and terraqueous distortions; and retained the expression of feature that such scenes had engendered." And with dumb impassivity, like twilight or the night, these nameless visitants watch the trivial movements of two turnip-diggers in the fields below them, who with like impassivity disturbed the clods.

But more than night and twilight with their brood of phantoms walk the world as sentient things. The Past walks with them as a presence that eternally persists, impalpable, yet, like the aged heath, somehow intent and watchful. It is not I who am fabricating Hardy's haunted world. It builds itself up before us as through a thousand hints we catch glimpses of the strange, profound, and baffling universe of his perception or conception—which, who can say? And in that universe in a sense that one deeply feels, whatever the cold intellect may think, nothing ever truly dies. The upper air—and this was never more intelligible than now, when over seas and continents the encircling atmosphere is a pulsing thoroughfare of disembodied voices—the upper air holds everlastingly all that through endless time has been committed to it.

Here's the mould of a musical bird long passed from
light,
Which over the earth before man came was winging;
There's a contralto voice I heard last night,
That lodges in me still with its sweet singing.

Such a dream is Time that the coo of this ancient bird
Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending
Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I
heard,
In the full-fugued song of the universe unending.

But it is earth in which we earthlings are undying, the perpetual participants in the blind processes we call life.

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound

In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

And there are survivals yet more secret and intangible:

I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.

The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance—that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die.

And so, on the age-old soil of Wessex, as a ghostly co-weaver in the web of human destiny, there lives through its ancient vestiges the immemorial pagan Past. The plateaux are "bosomed with semi-globular tumuli—as if Cybele the Many-breasted were supinely extended there." The Roman Road runs straight and bare across the heath, "near where, men say, once stood the Fane to Venus, on the Down"—the road "where Legions had wayfared." The mocking bonfires on the heath are lineal descendants of the British pyres

whose ashes still lie fresh and undisturbed beneath the barrows. Eustacia Vye, who glided down the barrow, is as pagan and nocturnal as the heath itself. And when the Roman shrine at Aquae Sulis was uncovered,

> . . . a warm air came up from underground,
> And a flutter, as of a filmy shape unsepulchred,
> That collected itself, and waited, and looked around:
> Nothing was seen, but utterances could be heard:
> Those of the goddess whose shrine was beneath the pile
> Of the God with the baldachined altar overhead.

Then, when the faint, fluttery pagan chidings ceased,

> And the olden dark hid the cavities late laid bare,
> . . . all was suspended and soundless as before,
> Except for a gossamery noise fading off in the air.

Grim humour, if you will, this last; but it, like the rest, is a symbol of something which to Hardy (and to most of us who think) is a profound reality: the δύναμις ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου—the power of an indissoluble life—possessed and exercised by the undying Past.

But earth is to Hardy a haunted spot in a far more intimate, personal way. I know no poetry so pervaded as his with a sense of the continued presence of the dead, nor is there another body of verse in the world, I think, in which that sense is conveyed to us with such intolerable poignancy and

beauty. It is a strange paradox. No poet of our day is, in his sharp breach with tradition, so intensely of his time as Thomas Hardy; and no poet writing to-day would have been so utterly at home on earth a thousand years ago. No one but Hardy could have written the passing strange and moving lines in which the souls of the men of Wessex slain in the Boer war come home to the ancient promontory on which ghosts have walked since the Stone Age—come with

> A whirr, as of wings
> Waved by mighty-vanned flies,
> Or by night-moths of measureless size,
> And in softness and smoothness well-nigh beyond hearing
> Of corporal things.

No one but Hardy could have written this about "Old Furniture":

> I see the hands of the generations
> That owned each shiny familiar thing
> In play on its knobs and indentations,
> And with its ancient fashioning
> Still dallying:
>
> Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
> As in a mirror a candle flame
> Shows images of itself, each frailer
> As it recedes. . . .

And all about us there are ghostly whispers:

" Gone," I call them, gone for good, that group of
local hearts and heads;
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes it back
from walls and leads,
They've a way of whispering to me—fellow-wight who
yet abide—
In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone cave's stillicide.

But far more often love and death walk hand in hand along frequented ways:

My spirit will not haunt the mound
Above my breast,
But travel, memory-possessed,
To where my tremulous being found
Life largest, best.

My phantom-footed shape will go
When nightfall grays
Hither and thither along the ways
I and another used to know
In backward days.

And there you'll find me, if a jot
You still should care
For me, and for my curious air;
If otherwise, then I shall not,
For you, be there.

And the dead are " there " in memory, and in a hundred poems which probe to the quick, there

unfolds, touched with grave pity and phrased with stern restraint, the human tragedy of belated recollection.

> " Why do you stand in the dripping rye,
> Cold-lipped, unconscious, wet to the knee,
> When there are firesides near? " said I.
> " I told him I wished him dead," said she.
>
> " Yea, cried it in my haste to one
> Whom I had loved, whom I well loved still;
> And die he did. And I hate the sun,
> And stand here lonely, aching, chill;
>
> " Stand waiting, waiting under skies
> That blow reproach, the while I see
> The rocks sheer off to where he lies
> Wrapt in a peace withheld from me! "

Or this:

> How she would have loved
> A party to-day!—
> Bright-hatted and gloved,
> With table and tray
> And chairs on the lawn
> Her smiles would have shone
> With welcomings. . . . But
> She is shut, she is shut
> From friendship's spell
> In the jailing shell
> Of her tiny cell.

> And she would have sought
> With a child's eager glance
> The shy snowdrops brought
> By the new year's advance, .
> And peered in the rime
> Of Candlemas-time
> For crocuses . . . chanced
> It that she were not tranced
> From sights she loved best;
> Wholly possessed
> By an infinite rest!

In their penetrating vision into the sealed yet tenanted chambers of the heart no less than for their noble austerity of rhythm and diction, the later poems are among the things which men will not let die. And in them the Ironic Spirits, audible still, are yielding to the Spirit of the Pities.

And now we come to the central mystery, in which all these scattered intimations of shadowy presences cohere—to the Infinite Haunter of a universe that is Its troubled dream.

For all the ghostly shapes that stalk the twilight and the night—projections of human finitude against the unseeing sky, or of the changeless Past upon the fleeting Present—are but the faintest adumbrations of that stupendous panorama which unrolls through *The Dynasts*, inexorable and unhurried as the nightly revolution of the stars. There is in literature no conception like it. The colossal stage is now the Earth and now the Over-

world; the action is the vast convulsion of the Napoleonic wars; the actors are the innumerable throng of human participants in the cataclysm, and Phantom Intelligences of the Overworld. And these Intelligences are the Shade of the Earth, and the Ancient Spirit of the Years, and the Spirit of the Pities, and Spirits Sinister and Ironic—mocking Mephistophelian Voices, and " the passionless Insight of the Ages," and " the Universal Sympathy of human nature; " and they view (and we with them) the human scene from the towering upper storeys of the world, or else take human form, and, like the ancient Adversary, walk, mocking or in pity, to and fro upon the earth. I suspect that there has never been in English letters, at least since Shakespeare, a genius more essentially pictorial than Thomas Hardy's, and in *The Dynasts* it is at the culmination of its power. All the pomp and circumstance of courts and chancellories, all the glory and (depicted with unsparing realism) all the gruesome spectacles of war, all the little human lives in hamlets and on highways drawn without their will into the vortex—all these pass before us in vivid, incredible profusion, as if thrown by some magical cinematograph upon an endlessly unfolding screen. Nor are we ever left long at close quarters, where the shows of earth loom large. There comes at intervals a recession of the point of vision into endless space, and this is the instrument of Hardy's most relentless irony.

For suddenly, as the shifting spectacle unrolls, we are rapt to vast aërial distances, to look down on earth from "architraves of sunbeam-smitten cloud" with the eyes of passionless or pitying or sardonic Phantoms, whose vision is cosmic, not terrestrial. And not even Swift himself has more remorselessly depicted human littleness.

The Fore Scene in the Overworld sets the panorama moving:

> The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the north of France across Russia like a grey-green garment hemmed by the Ural mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean.
>
> The point of view then sinks downwards through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples . . . are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities. . . .
>
> A new and penetrating light descends in the spectacle, enduing men and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display.

The Spirit of the Years interprets the amazing spectacle; "the anatomy of the Immanent Will disappears"; and the action begins.

Then in measured succession glimpse follows terrible glimpse.

A bird's-eye perspective is revealed of the peninsular tract of Portuguese territory lying between the shining pool of the Tagus on the east, and the white-frilled Atlantic lifting rhythmically on the west. . . . Innumerable human figures are busying themselves like cheese-mites . . . digging ditches, piling stones, felling trees. . . . Three reddish-grey streams of marching men loom out to the north. . . . These form the English army. . . . Looked down upon, their motion seems peristaltic and vermicular, like that of three caterpillars. . . . The Dumb Show ends, and the point of view sinks to the earth.

The huge procession along the great road across Europe from Vienna to Munich and from Munich westerly to France dwindles to " a puny concatenation of specks," like " a file of ants crawling along a strip of garden-matting "; the battle of Leipzig, as the Leipzig clocks imperturbably strike nine, is seen only as " amorphous drifts, clouds, and waves of conscious atoms, surging and rolling together "; before the battle of Wagram " a species of simmer . . . pervades the living spectacle." Before the battle of Waterloo, " as the curtain of the mist is falling, the point of vision soars again. . . . From all parts of Europe long and sinister black files are crawling hitherward in serpentine lines, like slow-worms through grass. They are the advancing armies of the Allies." That is the impending cata-

clysm seen *sub specie aeternitatis* by the Phantoms of the Overworld. But the lines march over an Underworld—a world likewise of worms to their mortal sight, as they are worms to the sight above:

The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels,
The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled;
And the hedgehog's household the sapper unseals.

The snail draws in at the terrible tread,
But in vain; he is crushed by the felloe-rim;
The worm asks what can be overhead,

And wriggles deep from a scene so grim,
And guesses him safe; for he does not know
What a foul red flood will be soaking him!

Waterloo between the passionless Intelligences and the Worms—that is Lilliput and Brobdingnag rolled into one with quintessential mockery.

But the most pitiless irony of all is in another vision. Again we are "high amongst the clouds, which, opening and shutting fitfully to the wind, reveal the earth as a confused expanse merely." On the far land-verge is seen "An object like a dun-piled caterpillar, Shuffling its length in painful heaves along." It is "the Army Which once was called the Grand; now in retreat From Moscow's muteness"—burning Moscow, seen from the clouds in the blackness to the north as "a lurid, malignant star." And the Recording Angels who are

chronicling, stage by stage, the flight, set down their closing entry:

> And so and thus it nears Smolensko's walls,
> And, stayed its hunger, starts anew its crawls,
> Till floats down one white morsel, which appals.

And that white morsel, the veriest pigmy among all the objects in the whole colossal panorama, is the most terrible. For (the laconic comment goes on), "What has floated down from the sky upon the Army is a flake of snow. Then come another and another, till natural features . . . are confounded, and all is phantasmal grey and white. The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead of increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside." Beyond that last merciless figure, irony cannot go.

I have given but the barest inkling of the conception which underlies Hardy's amazing epic drama. But I know nothing in its fashion more Titanic than that huge stage on which no longer the stars in secret influence comment, but Phantasms—Phantasms which are themselves hovering projections, like the dilated pattern of lantern-rays against the tent-shaped sky, of the finite Intelligences resident in the cheese-mite animalcules below. It is irony within irony, for the watchers and the watched are

each the simulacrum of the other, and alike inhere in—what?

And now we reach the heart of Hardy's *Weltanschauung*, the Haunter of Haunters in his ghost-frequented universe. For in and through, above and below the human spectacle weave "the ubiquitous urgings of the Immanent Will." And that spectacle is but "one flimsy riband of Its web,"

Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and plashings of the flames
Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
And onward into ghastly gulfs of sky,
Where hideous presences churn through the dark—
Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
Hanging amid deep wells of nothingness.

And the "dreaming, dark, dumb Thing" that weaves unwittingly the tiny, tragi-comic human web is immanent no less in that stupendous flux. But—and this is the element of profound significance—that "viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel" is a Somnambulist who may one day awake; it is the blind dimly groping after vision, the unconscious struggling painfully up to consciousness, as we who are of a piece with it agonize back to our sense of self from the black abyss of a swoon. And earth and the unsounded depths of space beyond the flaming barriers of the world must be read as a fleeting moment in the unfolding of that unfathomable cosmic drama. "Ungefähr

sagt das der Pfarrer auch, Nur mit ein Bischen andern Worten "—for another, who at moments was among the world's great poets, saw it too: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." And what the sons of God are, who can say? But as for the *waiting*, Paul and Thomas Hardy are at one:

At last I entered a long dark gallery,
  Catacomb-lined; and ranged at the side
  Were the bodies of men from far and wide
Who, motion past, were nevertheless not dead.

  "The sense of waiting here strikes strong;
Everyone's waiting, waiting, it seems to me;
  What are you waiting for so long?—
    What is to happen?" I said.

"O we are waiting for one called God," said they,
  "(Though by some the Will, or Force, or Laws;
  And, vaguely, by some, the Ultimate Cause;)
Waiting for him to see us before we are clay.
  Yes; waiting, waiting, for God *to know it*." . . .
  "To know what?" questioned I.
"To know how things have been going on earth and
      below it:
  It is clear he must know some day."
  I thereon asked them why.

"Since he made us humble pioneers
Of himself in consciousness of Life's tears,

It needs no mighty prophecy
To tell that what he could mindlessly show
His creatures, he himself will know.

" By some still close-cowled mystery
We have reached feeling faster than he,
But he will overtake us anon,
If the world goes on."

Nor is that dramatic " Fragment " all. " Hap," " Nature's Questioning," " Doom and She," " By the Earth's Corpse," " The Sleep-Worker," " New Year's Eve," " God's Education," " God's Funeral," " The Blow "—through that stern unflinching succession of poems, and through the long, inexorable evolution of *The Dynasts*, and through those strange broodings of intent and watchful twilights, ebbs and flows that sense of a waiting universe.

" I have finished another year," said God,
" In grey, green, white, and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

" And what's the good of it? " I said—

and after question and answer,

He sank to raptness as of yore,
And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
In his unweeting way.

But over against that must be set this:

> And if it prove that no man did,
> And that the Inscrutable, the Hid,
> Was cause alone
> Of this foul crash our lives amid,
>
> I'll go in due time, and forget
> In some deep graveyard's oubliette
> The thing whereof I groan,
> And cease from troubling; thankful yet
>
> Time's finger should have stretched to show
> No aimful author's was the blow
> That swept us prone,
> But the Immanent Doer's That doth not know,
>
> Which in some age unguessed of us
> May lift Its blinding incubus,
> And see, and own:
> " It grieves me I did thus and thus! "

Nor is it accident that these next lines fall from the lips of the Spirit of the Pities:

> Yet It may wake and understand
> Ere Earth unshape, know all things, and
> With knowledge use a painless hand,
> A painless hand!

On that note the matchless After Scene of *The Dynasts* ends:

> O Immanence, That reasonest not
> In putting forth all things begot,
> Thou build'st Thy house in space—for what?

O Loveless, Hateless!—past the sense
Of kindly eyed benevolence,
To what tune danceth this Immense? . . .

Heaving dumbly
As we deem,
Moulding numbly
As in dream,
Apprehending not how fare the sentient subjects of Its scheme.

Nay;—shall not Its blindness break?
Yea, must not Its heart awake,
Promptly tending
To Its mending
In a genial germing purpose, and for loving-kindness' sake?

Should It never
Curb or cure
Aught whatever
Those endure
Whom It quickens, let them darkle to extinction swift and sure.

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

And there may fitly end this fragmentary abstract of a very great poet's reading of earth. What you and I may think of its validity is for the moment quite beside the point. It stands, in its stark grandeur and its sad sincerity, among the imperishable things.

II

And now we enter another world, *a riveder le stelle* —a world of windswept daylight and the lucid upper spaces of the air. For Meredith's reading of earth stands over against Hardy's in vivid contrast, and that antithesis, at whatever cost of omitted loveliness, must rigidly define our choice and limit our consideration.

And first of all, Hardy's glory of darkness yields place to an earth above which, a luminous effluence, brightness lingers. For no poet whom I can think of is so dear a lover of light as Meredith—not light that throbs, like Shelley's, ethereal and unlocalized in the intense inane, but light that lies like a bright robe upon earth. Even darkness itself is light about us, with " that fire in the night which lights the night and draws the night to look at it "; and the radiance in which Meredith's daylight world is bathed is too pervasive to admit of illustration here. But his unhaunted twilights that come and go in beauty confront, like spirits of light for love of earth come down to dwell among us, the spectral presences that wait and watch in Hardy's world. Even

the human face, in that intimate interpenetration of earth and man which is the essence of Meredith's unique imaginative vision, is invested with the loveliness of dawn and evening. " Her face was like the quiet morning of a winter day." " Her face was like an Egyptian sky fronting night." And that same sense of intimacy between earth and man pervades the sunsets and the dawns which lend to earth " grave heavenliness," and humanize the alien sky. The twilights of the two interpreters are visitants from two divergent worlds of thought and feeling, and in the words which Meredith uses of the fountain and the rill, " I know not which has most to tell."

Moreover, through both Hardy's and Meredith's twilights moves the moon. Hardy's moon is apt to be a goblin in the sky:

And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where
mute and cold it globed
Like a drifting dolphin's eye seen through a lapping
wave.

At the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn,
The moon was at the window-square,
Deedily brooding in deformed decay—
The curve hewn off her cheek as by an adze.

And the moon who peeps in at windows reads her earth with merciless finality:

" What do you think of it, Moon,
As you go?
Is Life much, or no? "

" O, I think of it, often think of it
As a show
God ought surely to shut up soon,
As I go."

But to Meredith it is an intimate presence among the fair, familiar things of earth. " The moon . . . had now topped the cedar, and was pure silver. . . . And in the West, facing it, was an arch of twilight and tremulous rose; as if a spirit hung there over the shrouded sun "; " A sleepy fire of early moonlight hung through the dusky fir-branches "; " A pillar of dim silver rain fronted the moon on the hills "; " Over the flowering hawthorn the moon stood like a wind-blown white rose of the heavens "; " With slow foot The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute, Begins among her silent bars to climb." In each of the two poets the moon is of a piece with the subtly fashioned universe of blending thought and imagery of which it is a part. To love both Meredith and Hardy is more than a test of catholicity. It means possession of the power to apprehend at once the poignant beauty and the nameless dread that hand in hand walk with us through the world.

Death itself is conceived by Meredith in terms of brightness falling from the air:

I hang upon the boundaries like light
Along the hills when downward goes the day.

I enter the black boat
  Upon the wide grey sea,
Where all her set suns float.

But oftener—and now we come very close to Thomas Hardy—death, like life, is but a phase of the eternal metamorphoses of earth, to be met with

Fortitude quiet as Earth's
At the shedding of leaves.

" Teach me," Meredith exclaims,

Teach me to feel myself the tree,
  And not the withered leaf.
Fixed am I and await the dark to-be.
  And O, green bounteous Earth! . . .
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
Into the breast that gives the rose,
  Shall I with shuddering fall?

Set beside that the no less lovely, infinitely hopeless requiem of Hardy:

May his sad sunken soul merge into nought
Meekly and gently as a breeze at eve.

And for Meredith too the moving air is merged with the passing of our frail mortality:

A wind sways the pines,
  And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.

The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
  And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
  Even we,
  Even so.

And in these lines we reach another of those presences which, like the light, are all-pervasive and instinct with meaning.

For as in no other writer whom I know the great winds sweep through Meredith's pages, prose and verse. There is something tenuous and ghostly about Hardy's winds. The breezes filter through twigs " as through a strainer; it was as if the night sang dirges with clenched teeth." The " plaintive November wind . . . is a worn whisper, dry and papery "; it plays its " mewling music on the strings Of . . . shipmasts," or " mooes and mouths the chimney like a horn "; " the dead and dry carcasses of leaves tap the ground." But the wind which blows through Meredith's world is the great South-wester with its glory of flying clouds—" the charioted South-west at full charge behind his panting coursers." Every reader of the novels and the poems knows those " day[s] of the cloud in fleets "; days " Of wedded white and blue, that sail Immingled, with a footing ray In shadow-sandals

down [the] vale"; days when, as in the magnificent *Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn*, "the bull-voiced oak is battling" with the glorious South-west that plunges on it with the pressure of a sea. The wind that passeth and cleanseth; the south wind that quieteth the earth; the fair weather that cometh with terrible majesty out of the north; the balancings of the clouds—all those swift angels of the air on which the Hebrew poet pondered are to Meredith what the brooding intentness of night is to Hardy's sombre gaze. And they stand in close relation to a conception more deeply characteristic still.

For over and over again we are met as we read with a "sense of wings uplifting" (to use Coleridge's splendid phrase), and even of an upward lift of earth itself: "A sharp breath of air had passed along the dews. . . . The sky, set with very dim distant stars, was in grey light round a small brilliant moon. Every space of earth lifted clear to her; the woodland listened; and in the bright silence the nightingales sang loud." Hardy's earth lifts and listens too, but the profound difference between two determining conceptions is set off sharply in the passage which has been our text before: "The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy. . . . The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen." There, compact in two score words,

is the very quintessence of Hardy's moors; here, in a sentence, is the very spirit of Meredith's downs, "fronting the paleness of earliest dawn, and then their arch and curve and dip against the pearly grey of the half-glow; and then, among their hollows, lo, the illumination of the East all around . . . and a gallop for miles along the turfy thymy rolling billows. . . . 'It's the nearest hit to wings we can make.'" One of Meredith's characters tells of "his dream of the winged earth on her flight from splendour to splendour." That is Meredith's vision too. His beloved Alps hung at dawn beyond the Adriatic, and "colour . . . wavered in the remoteness, and was quick and dim as though it fell on beating wings," while beyond "new heights arose, that soared, or stretched their white uncertain curves in sky like wings traversing infinity." Even so again, "wavering in and out of view like flying wings, and shadowed like wings of archangels with rose and with orange and with violet," the Alps look down on Italy. "You might take them for mystical streaming torches. . . . They lean as in a great flight forward upon Lombardy." We have passed from a world above which darkness loves to brood to a world of soaring spaces drenched in light. Even human faces stir in us at times this sense of lifting wings. "He had a look superior to simple strength and grace; the look of a great sky-bird about to mount"; "Her face was like the after-sunset across a rose-garden, with the wings of an

eagle poised outspread on the light." And Sandra Belloni cries: "My misery now is gladness, is like rain-drops on rising wings." We are never in Meredith long away from "the joy of life in steepness overcome And victories of ascent." France, "breast-bare, bare-limbed" for conflict is, "in her bright jet, Earth's crystal spring to sky." Over against Hardy's inexorable "glide of a water-drop down a bud" rise Meredith's mountain-songs, which seem to "spring like clear water into air, and fall wavering as a feather falls, or the light about a stone in water." Diana of the Crossways, in the radiance of her young beauty, is "a spirit leaping and shining like a mountain water." And as the downs—whose "long stretching lines are coursing greyhounds in full career"—become to Meredith an image of "the life in swiftness," so his winds pervade, like the lifting of wings, his profoundly characteristic figures of spiritual movement upward and ahead. "Let her life be torn and streaming like the flag of battle, it must be forward to the end."

> Fruitful sight has Westermain.
> There we laboured, and in turn
> Forward our blown lamps discern.

And finally, in a sentence, the gist of the meaning of men: "real flesh; a soul born active, wind-beaten, but ascending." And now we reach the heart of Meredith's philosophy.

For that philosophy is essentially terrestrial, not (like Hardy's) cosmic, but it is a philosophy of *ascent.* For earth is more than her beauty; she is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and through us she is spirit too. And in this single aspect of their readings of the riddle, Meredith and Hardy are fundamentally at one. For in each earth somehow comes to consciousness in us. But there the likeness ends. For Hardy's Immanence is a dumb, foresightless dreamer, and we its disordered dream. But the core of earth's meaning to Meredith lies in the fact that "She [is] Spirit in her clods," and "That from flesh unto spirit man grows Even here on the sod under sun." And again, in the poem called *Hard Weather,* the wind of Meredith's love becomes a symbol of "Life . . . at her grindstone set That she may give us edging keen, String us for battle." Because

> [Earth] winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,
> To dip her chosen in her source:
> Contention is the vital force,
> Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts,
> *Sky of the senses!* on which height,
> Not disconnected, yet released,
> They see how spirit comes to light.

And spirit, earth-born, is heaven-mounting:

> [Earth's] passion for old giantkind,
> That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,
> Devolves on them who read aright
> Her meaning and devoutly serve;

Nor in her starlessness of night
Peruse her with the craven nerve:
But even as she from grass to corn,
To eagle high from grubbing mole,
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,
The station for the flight of soul.

That, like its noble counterpart with which Goethe's last recorded conversations end, is tonic doctrine, and like Hardy's it is self-contained and self-sufficient. For earth, with her flame of a soul born of travail of flesh, is her own sole revelation, in which natural and supernatural are one. And all this finds, in one of the most profoundly moving passages in modern poetry, its rich, concrete embodiment in the lovely symbol of the white wild cherry—that " young apparition,"

Known, yet wonderful, white
Surpassingly; doubtfully known,
For it struck as the birth of Light:
Even Day from the dark unyoked. . . .
Its beauty to vividness blown,
Drew the life in me forward, chased,
From aloft on a pinnacle's range,
That hindward spidery line,
The length of the ways I had paced,
A footfarer out of the dawn. . . .
She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood.
Yet a presence throbbing alive. . . .

A spirit born of a tree;
Because earth-rooted alive:
Huntress of things worth pursuit
Of souls; in our naming, dreams.

For dreams, as Meredith conceives them, are Earth's endowment of " her great venture, Man," are Earth herself awakening and ascending:

The dream is an atmosphere;
A scale still ascending to knit
The clear to the loftier Clear.
'Tis Reason herself, tiptoe
At the ultimate bound of her wit,
On the verges of Night and Day.

And in one of the latest poems that vision of Earth ascending spirit-wards through man, which is the heart of Meredith's philosophy, attains exalted utterance:

Close on the heart of Earth his bosom beats,
When he the mandate lodged in it obeys,
Alive to breast a future wrapped in haze,
Strike camp, and onward, like the wind's cloud-fleets.
Unresting she, unresting he, from change
To change, as rain of cloud, as fruit of rain;
She feels her blood-tree throbbing in her grain,
Yet skyward branched, with loftier mark and range.
No miracle the sprout of wheat from clod,
She knows, nor growth of man in grisly brute;
But he, the flower at head and soil at root,
Is miracle, guides he the brute to God.

And that way seems he bound; that way the road,
With his dark-lantern mind, unled, alone,
Wearifully through forest-tracks unsown,
He travels, urged by some internal goad.

And when the long unfolding of that evolution is complete, then (and this is strangely like yet unlike Hardy's final vision)

> They shall uplift their Earth to meet her Lord,
> Themselves the attuning chord!

And in that great conception of the earnest expectation of a waiting universe, dimly conscious of some vast, far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moves, Meredith and Hardy are at one.

OF READING BOOKS

OF READING BOOKS

THE text (if I may call it so) of what I mean to say is this: "I hope, y-wis, to rede . . . som day." Which, translated into the vernacular, means: "I hope to Heaven that some day I'll get a chance to *read*." That pious hope is part of a line of Chaucer, and unless I much mistake, it finds an ardent response in the minds of scores of us to-day, who find ourselves caught in the toils of a more restless and exigent century than his. And what I propose to say about reading—whether it be for delight, or for information, or for something deeper still—must, if it is to have any value, take into account conditions which all save a few happy mortals are destined to meet.

I

For we live in an age and a land above all things marked by hurried motion. I happened to come from Pittsburgh to New York the other day, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Every few minutes another train flashed by in the opposite direction. On a hundred thousand miles of rails the same flying shuttles were hurtling back and forth. The

taxi which took me from one station to another in New York was numbered (they know better now) one million seven hundred thousand and odd, and the other million or two were trying simultaneously to hurl themselves along the streets. And under the street, packed trains, a couple of minutes or so apart, were crashing back and forth in the din of steel on steel flung back from walls of stone. My neighbour in the smoking-car that morning was manfully ploughing his way through a Gargantuan Sunday paper. My eye caught a page-wide headline in one of those instructive sections which temper the comic supplement to the inquiring spirit: "Power enough in a glass of water to drive an ocean liner." And I wondered how far and how fast, when science had done its worst, our harmless necessary glass of water in the morning might one day drive us! A sip before breakfast here in Boston, and in an instant, if we will it, we are catapulted to Chicago. Why not? That is the logical goal of our endeavours. The word of the hour is the word of my headline—"drive." To carry on the business of college, church, or hospital, we initiate a "drive." Even in religion, education, and philanthropy we tend to think and act in terms of energy translated into tense and often fevered motion. The thing meets us everywhere. "In a weekly paper not very long ago"—and now I am quoting William James—"I remember reading a story in which, after describing the beauty and interest of the heroine's per-

sonality, the author summed up her charms by saying that to all who looked upon her an impression as of 'bottled lightning' was irresistibly conveyed. Bottled lightning, in truth," William James goes on, "is one of our American ideals, even of a young girl's character!" That was twenty-five years ago. To-day, be they masculine or feminine, we dub such persons dynamos. And the human dynamo is fast becoming our ideal.

Matthew Arnold saw all this coming—saw it, indeed, already well under way—much more than fifty years ago. "O born in days when wits were fresh and clear," he cries in his *Scholar-Gipsy*,

> And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
> Before *this strange disease of modern life*,
> *With its sick hurry, its divided aims*,
> *Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts*, was rife—
> Fly hence, our contact fear! . . .

And he continues:

> But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
> For strong is the infection of our mental strife.

And in these last lines Arnold puts his finger on the core of the malady, so far as we are concerned. For this tension in which to-day we live and move and have our being is contagious. And there Matthew Arnold is at one with William James, in that wise discourse on which I have already drawn—his talk to students on "The Gospel of Relaxation": "The American overtension and jerkiness and breathless-

ness and intensity," he declares, "are primarily social . . . phenomena. They are *bad habits* . . . bred of custom and example." And you know, and I know, that high tension *is* contagious, and that we move in an atmosphere charged with energy driving at action, which sets us driving too, whether we are geared to anything or not. And we are helpless, unless—but that is to anticipate. And now I come back for a moment to Arnold again:

> But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise—
> What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
> What leisure to grow wise?
>
> Like children bathing on the shore,
> Buried a wave beneath,
> The second wave succeeds, before
> We have had time to breathe.
>
> Too fast we live, too much are tried,
> Too harass'd, to attain
> Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
> And luminous view to gain.

And that brings us within sight of our theme.

For one of the consequences of this modern malady of ours is that the gracious things which lend to life and human intercourse the beauty of serenity and comeliness are gone, or on the wane. "The wisdom of a learned man," wrote the author of Ecclesiasticus long centuries ago, "cometh by opportunity of leisure," and not wisdom only, but

grace, and gentle breeding, and amenity, and poise come so, and only so. And leisure (which is not to be confused with empty time, but which is time through which free, life-enhancing currents flow)—leisure in these days is something to be sought and cherished as a rare and priceless boon; leisure to think, and talk, and write, and read—lost arts else, all of them. "John Wesley's conversation is good," said Dr. Johnson to Boswell once, "but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do." The sainted John Wesley in the rôle of a modern "hustler" is a little humorous, and Samuel Johnson did a certain amount of work himself. But an age that loved, on occasion, to fold its legs, and have its talk out, and its book out, and its delightful familiar letters out, may not have been one hundred per cent. efficient (in our devastating modern phrase), but it did have shelter to grow ripe, and it did have leisure to grow wise, and more than our own driving, restless period, it did possess its soul. "He hasteth well," wrote Chaucer, whom business could not make dull, "who wisely can abide," and we first learn to live when we

> . . . claim not every laughing Hour
> For handmaid to [our] striding power . . .
> To usher for a destined space
> (*Her own sweet errands all forgone*)
> The too imperious traveller on.

"We are great fools," says Montaigne: "'He spends his life in idleness,' we say, 'I've done nothing to-day.' What! Have you not *lived*? That is not only the most fundamental, but the most illustrious of your occupations."

Our salvation, then, lies in the refusal to be for ever hurried with the crowd, and in our resolution to step out of it at intervals, and drink from deeper wells. "Il se faut reserver une arrière boutique, toute nostre, toute franche"—"we ought to reserve for ourselves an *arrière boutique*, a back-shop, all our own, all free, in which we may set up our own true liberty and principal retreat and solitude." That is Montaigne's ripe, leisured wisdom, and in that *arrière boutique* the wish: "I hope, y-wis, to rede . . . som day," may find accomplishment. And so I mean to talk for a little while, most informally and most unacademically, about reading—a subject which, partly through our fault, I fear, some of you have come to think of in terms of courses and degrees, but which is infinitely bigger than all that. It is not even scholarship that I shall have in mind. It is simply reading, as men and women have always read, for the delight of it, and for the consequent enriching and enhancement of one's life. I have put delight deliberately first, for the rest, I believe, is contingent upon that. "In general," said Goethe once, "we learn from what we love." And I propose first of all to exhibit some lovable readers—not a Professor or even a Doctor in the

lot, I think—and allow them to speak for themselves. And first, then, reading for the sheer delight of it.

II

"In anything fit to be called by the name of reading," says Stevenson in his delectable *Gossip on Romance*,

> the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought. It was for this . . . that we read so closely, and loved our books so dearly, in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. . . . We dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn where, toward the close of the "year 17—," several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. A friend of mine preferred the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to windward, and a scowling fellow of Herculean proportions striding along the beach—

and so on delightfully. Now it is that unquenchable, bubbling zest on which I wish for the moment to insist, and Stevenson's is the gusto of "the bright, troubled period of boyhood." Let us set beside it, as is fitting, its companion piece. "But, my

dearest Catherine "—and need I say that it is the immortal and adorable Jane Austen who is speaking—

"But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with 'Udolpho'"?

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil."

"Are you indeed? How delightful! Oh, I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?"

"Oh! yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me. I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton; I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh, I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you; if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world."

"Dear creature, how much I am obliged to you! and when you have finished 'Udolpho,' we will read 'The Italian' together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you."

"Have you indeed? How glad I am! What are they all?"

"I will read you their names directly. Here they are, in my pocket-book: 'Castle of Wolfenbach,' 'Clermont,' 'Mysterious Warnings,' 'Necromancer of the Black Forest,' 'Midnight Bell,' 'Orphan of the Rhine,' and 'Horrid Mysteries.' Those will last us some time."

"Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?"

"Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them."

Well, that is the meat upon which your inveterate readers are apt to have fed in childhood, and happy are you, if you have been caught at it young. For romances, and stories of giants, magicians, and genii, read with a child's quick and plastic imagination, are stepping-stones to later, deeper, if no more enduring loves. "I read through all gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time," wrote Coleridge to Tom Poole in those precious fragments of an autobiography,

and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant Killer, and the like. And I used to lie by the wall, and mope; and my spirits used to come upon me suddenly and in a flood—and then I was accustomed to run up and down the churchyard, and act over again all I had been reading on the docks, the nettles, and the rank grass. At six years of age . . . I found the Arabian Nights' Entertainments . . . and I distinctly recollect the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window where the book lay, and when the sun came upon it, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask, and read. . . . My whole being was, with eyes closed to every object of present sense, to crumple myself up in a sunny corner, and read, read, read.

I know there are those to whom all this is heresy, and who would feed children pedagogically desic-

cated food. There have always been such earnest and misguided souls. Charles Lamb has a gloriously volcanic outburst, in a letter to Coleridge, about Mrs. Barbauld's edifying books for children—Mrs. Barbauld, who objected to *The Ancient Mariner* because it was improbable, and who rushed in where angels fear to tread with *An Address to the Deity*:

I am glad [he writes] the snuff and Pi-pos's books please. " Goody Two Shoes " is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery. . . . Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. B's books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a Horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a Horse, and such like: instead of that beautiful Interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history!

Damn them! [The Bowdlerizing editors print " Hang them "—but Lamb was righteously indignant, and did *not* write " Hang "]—I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man and child.

That at least cannot be charged with ambiguity,

but Lamb expressed himself again—this time with reference to a girl's reading:

> She was tumbled early [he is writing of Bridget Elia, who was Mary Lamb], by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

On that point I venture no opinion, but the doctrine of the rest is sound.

Now I have dwelt on this seemingly irrelevant theme of early reading, because the element of delight is the point I wish just now to emphasize, and that eager, childlike zest, once caught, is seldom lost. There is no essential difference, for example, between Coleridge's absorption in the "Arabian Nights," and the irrepressible gusto with which John Keats read Shakespeare. Here is a bit of a letter which Keats wrote from Burford Bridge, one moonlit night, while he was deep in the composition of *Endymion*:

> One of the three books I have with me is Shakespeare's Poems: I never found so many beauties in the Sonnets—they seem to be full of fine things said un-

intentionally—in the intensity of working out conceits. Is this to be borne? Hark ye!

> When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
> Which erst from heat did canopy the head,
> And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
> Borne on the bier with white and bristly head.

He has left nothing to say about nothing or anything: for look at snails—you know what he says about Snails—you know when he talks about "cockled Snails"—well, in one of these sonnets, he says—the chap slips into—no! I lie! this is in the *Venus and Adonis*: the simile brought it to my Mind.

> As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
> Shrinks back into his shelly cave with pain. . . .

He overwhelms a genuine Lover of poesy with all manner of abuse, talking about—

> "a poet's rage
> And stretched metre of an antique song."

Which, by the bye, will be a capital motto for my poem, won't it? . . . By the Whim-King! I'll give you a stanza—

and at once he is off creating! That is Keats through and through—the Keats who went "ramping" (as Cowden Clarke put it) through *The Faerie Queene*; who "hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, 'What an image that is—*sea-shouldering whales*'"; who wrote, the night he first opened Chapman's Homer: "Then

felt I like some watcher of the skies When a new planet swims into his ken." I always think, when I read in Keats's letters the things he says about his books, of those lines in *Ruth*:

> Before me shone a glorious world—
> Fresh as a banner bright, unfurled
> To music suddenly.

I have known, *you* know, men and women—busy men and women, too—to whom a book still means that. It is the very spirit of Miranda's cry:

> O wonder!
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
> That has such people in't!

And I envy any one to whom for the first time—or for the hundredth time—the brave new world of books is opening, that world which has such people in it: Cleopatra, Mr. Pickwick, Helen of Troy, Samuel Pepys, the Wife of Bath, Sir John Falstaff, Mrs. Proudie, Sir Willoughby Patterne, Becky Sharp, Perdita, Pantagruel, Mephistopheles, Launcelot, Dido, and a thousand others more alive than you and I. "I doe nothing without blithenesse," wrote Montaigne in his essay on "Books"—and if I were going to that famous desert island for which we are periodically asked to select our five-foot shelf, Montaigne in his pithy, sinewy, succulent French would be almost the first whom I should pick—"Je ne fay rien sans gayeté"; and

no mortal ever went adventuring more blithely among books than Michael, Lord of Montaigne, or brought home richer treasure-trove.

"But," you will say to me, "we haven't time." I know it; very few of us these days have time—those least, I sometimes think, who have it most. But even if, being modern, and ambitious, and efficient, and all that, we are whirled along with our fellow atoms in the rush, we shall not be losing time if now and then we pause, and loaf (I wish the fine phrase had not been worn so trite), loaf, and invite our souls. And if you worship in the temple of efficiency, don't forget—and again I am drawing on the wise humanity of William James—that "just as a bicycle chain may be too tight, so may one's carefulness and conscientiousness be so tense as to hinder the running of one's mind." And after all, the smooth, free running of one's mind is fairly important to the precious efficiency of whatever machinery it be that your particular intelligence helps to run. Even as a business proposition (to fall again into the jargon of the day), time spent in unclamping our mental processes is time won, and not time lost.

And the thing is possible. Here is part of a letter which Matthew Arnold wrote to his sister. And Arnold, being a hard-driven public official, knew whereof he spoke.

If I were you, my dear Fan, I should now take to some regular reading, if it were only an hour a day. It

is the best thing in the world to have something of this sort as a point in the day, and far too few people know and use this secret. You would have your district still, and all your business as usual, but you would have this hour in your day in the midst of it all, and it would soon become of the greatest solace to you.

There is none of us for whom, with occasional lapses, that is not possible. And the last thing on earth that I am suggesting is that this hour be made a task—something to which we bind ourselves, with grim conscientiousness, as to one relentless duty more. I am not forgetting that I am still speaking of reading for the sheer delight of it, and to come down to cases is worth considerably more than further homiletics. This, from a letter of Edward Fitzgerald, is the sort of thing I mean:

> Here is a glorious sunshiny day: all the morning I read about Nero in Tacitus, lying at full length on a bench in the garden: a nightingale singing, and some red anemones eyeing the sun manfully not far off. A funny mixture all this: Nero and the delicacy of spring: all very human however.

Well, it *is* human, and the sort of reading which just now I have in mind is a creature not too bright and good even for human nature's daily food. Here is a passage in which William Hazlitt is talking of luxuriating in books:

> I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater,

after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's *Camilla*. It was on the 10th of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken.

And that delectable epicureanism is one of the marks of your true reader for delight—he remains a human being while he reads. There is Browning:

> Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
> Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
> Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
> Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

And here is Charles Lamb to Coleridge:

> Observe, there comes to you, by the Kendal waggon to-morrow . . . a box, containing the Miltons, the strange American Bible . . . Baxter's *Holy Commonwealth*, for which you stand indebted to me 3*s*. 6*d*.; an odd volume of Montaigne, being of no use to me, I having the whole; certain books belonging to Wordsworth, as do also the strange thick-hoofed shoes, which are very much admired at in London—

and there I must pause for a moment. For those thick-hoofed shoes are uncanny in their rich suggestiveness. They are Simon Lee and Goody Blake and the Idiot Boy and Peter Bell in a nutshell. And one of the fascinations of the letters—of Gray's inimitable raciness, of "the divine chit-chat of Cowper," as Coleridge calls it, of Lamb, Byron,

Keats, Fitzgerald, Stevenson—one of the quintessential pleasures of the letters lies in their wealth of unexpected flashes: "fine things said unintentionally," as Keats said of the Sonnets. And now I return to Lamb and his box of books:

If you find the Miltons in certain parts dirtied and soiled with a crumb of right Gloucester blacked in the candle (my usual supper), or peradventure, a stray ash of tobacco wafted into the crevices, look to that passage more especially: depend upon it, it contains good matter.

Crumbs of toasted cheese and the ash of a pipe suggest, however, concomitant delights perhaps of scant appeal to certain readers. Well, then, here is Dorothy Wordsworth:

Worked hard, and read *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and ballads. Sauntered a little in the garden. The blackbird sate quietly in its nest, rocked by the wind, and beaten by the rain. . . . Sauntered a good deal in the garden, bound carpets, mended old clothes, read *Timon of Athens*, dried linen. . . . In the afternoon we sate by the fire; I read Chaucer aloud, and Mary read the first canto of the *Faerie Queene*. . . . We spent the morning in the orchard reading the *Epithalamium* of Spenser; walked backwards and forwards. . . . We sowed the scarlet beans in the orchard, and read *Henry V* there. After dinner William added one to the orchard steps. . . . A sunshiny morning, I walked to the top of the hill and sate under a wall . . . facing the

sun. I read a scene or two in *As You Like It*. . . . Read part of *The Knight's Tale* with exquisite delight.

The Faerie Queene, the *Epithalamium*, *Henry V*, *As You Like It*, *The Knight's Tale*: those are the things that you "take," as if they were some academic whooping-cough or measles. And here, under no compulsion, is a woman reading them as if they'd actually been written to be *read*—reading them by the fire, in the orchard, on a hill-top under a wall in the sun—reading with exquisite delight. Heaven help us who teach, if through well-meant but sometimes misguided efforts to instruct, we have rubbed the bloom off the great books, and blunted the keen edge of pleasure such as that!

I have not the slightest intention in all this of implying that only the hundred best books, so to speak, will serve our purposes. Some of the most bewitching, completely captivating things in life lie buried in forgotten, relatively worthless books, if one has eyes to see them. An enterprising young friend of mine suggested in a letter that I had from him not long ago the alluring enterprise of an anthology of the *worst* poetry. I hope he will make it! For your true adventurer in "the wide, wild wilderness of books" knows that often, as Browning has it, "the worst turns the best for the brave." "I am going to repeat my old experiment," Stevenson wrote in a letter to Sidney Colvin, "after buckling to a while to write more correctly, lie down and

have a wallow." That is not elegant, but it is precise. And after one has wound up one's faculties, like Mrs. Battle, over serious things, one may indulge with propriety in what I suppose one may designate as a slumming expedition among books. I do not recommend it as a practice, but for occasional indulgence there are distinguished precedents. Macaulay, for instance, besides knowing the romances of a certain prolific Mrs. Meeke almost by heart, was devoted to the literary efforts of a Mrs. Kitty Cuthbertson—*Santo Sebastiano, or, the Young Protector, The Forest of Montalbano, The Romance of the Pyrenees, Adelaide, or, the Countercharm.* And on the last page of his edition of *Santo Sebastiano* appears an elaborate computation of the number of fainting fits that occur in the course of the five volumes. Here they are:

Julia de Clifford	11
Lady Delamore	4
Lady Theodosia	4
Lord Glenbrook	2
Lord Delamore	2
Lady Enderfield	1
Lord Ashgrove	1
Lord St. Orville	1
Henry Mildmay	1—

a total of 27. And here is a specimen of one of these catastrophes: "One of the sweetest smiles that ever animated the face of mortal now diffused

itself over the countenance of Lord St. Orville, as he fell at the feet of Julia in a death-like swoon."

There is a volume entitled *A Spiritual Diary and Soliloquies* by a certain John Ruttey, M.D., which, Boswell informs us, diverted Dr. Johnson vastly—one of these priceless things on which one stumbles now and then, and which reward excursions off the beaten path. Here are a few of the worthy Quaker's entries:

Tenth month, 1753.
23. Indulgence in bed an hour too long.
Twelfth month, 17. An hypochondriac obnubilation from wind and indigestion.
Ninth month, 28. An over-dose of whiskey.
29. [Which was the day after the over-dose] A dull, cross, choleric day.
First month, 22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.
31. Dogged on provocation.
Second month, 5. Very dogged or snappish . . .
23. Dogged again.
Fourth month, 29. Mechanically and sinfully dogged.

And here is an unillustrious sheaf of my own, gleaned from one of the most absurd, yet seductive volumes ever penned, Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*. The following sentences fall within two paragraphs: " Though this story was told in very plain language, it had particularly attracted Harley's notice; he had given it the tribute of some tears." In the same paragraph an unfortunate Ophelia-like lady sings: " There was a plaintive wildness in the air

not to be withstood ; and, except the keeper's, there was not an unmoistened eye around her." After three more sentences: "She stretched out her hand to Harley; he pressed it between both of his, and bathed it with his tears." In the same paragraph: "Harley looked on his ring. He put a couple of guineas into the man's hand: 'Be kind to that unfortunate.' He burst into tears and left them." A few pages later on: "He laid his left hand on his heart—the sword dropped from his right—he burst into tears." In the next paragraph: "The desperation that supported her was lost; she fell to the ground, and bathed his feet with her tears." In the following paragraph: "Nature at last prevailed, he fell on her neck, and mingled his tears with hers." On the next page: "As he spoke these last words, his voice trembled in his throat; it was now lost in his tears." A little later: "The girl cried afresh; Harley kissed off her tears as they flowed, and wept between every kiss." Finally: "The old man now paused a moment to take breath. He eyed Harley's face; it was bathed with tears; the story was grown familiar to himself; *he dropped one tear, and no more.*" The exquisite economy of that solitary tear beggars admiration.

I am not, as you see, submitting a bibliography, or suggesting learned apparatus. For the moment we are concerned with reading for the sheer delight of it, when the world is all before us where to choose. But with delight there may be coupled

something else. For one also reads to learn. And about that and one thing more, I shall be very brief.

III

Let me begin with a remark of Oliver Wendell Holmes:

> There are about as many twins in the births of thought as of children. For the first time in your lives you learn some fact or come across some idea. Within an hour, a day, a week, that same fact or idea strikes you from another quarter. . . . Yet no possible connection exists between the two channels by which the thought or the fact arrived. . . . And so it has happened to me and to every person, often and often, to be hit in rapid succession by these twinned facts or thoughts, as if they were linked like chain-shot.

Now all of us have had that experience, and it is apt to give us a curious sensation. "Here," we say, "we've gone all our life without seeing that, and now all at once we see it at every turn. What does it mean?" Not long ago, for example, my attention was called for the first time, in a letter, to an international society of writers; two days later my eye caught a reference to it in a daily paper. Soon afterward I heard, for the first time to my knowledge, the name of a certain breed of terriers. Within a week I had come across the name in two

different novels I was reading. What had happened? Simply this. I had doubtless seen both names time and again before, but nothing had ever stamped them on my memory, and so when they turned up again, they wakened no response. Then, all at once, something did fix them in my mind, and when they met my eye once more, they were there behind it, so to speak, to recognize themselves when they appeared. There had been set up in my brain, as it were, by each of them, a magnetic centre, ready to catch and attract its like.

Now one of the things which the process we call education ought to do, and by no means always does, is to establish in the mind as many as possible of these magnetic centres—live spots, which thrust out tentacles of association, and catch and draw to themselves their kind. For there are few joys in reading like the joy of the chase. And the joy of the chase comes largely through the action of these centres of association in your brain. Let me illustrate what I mean, and since first-hand experience imparts a certain vividness which abstract theorizing lacks, let me use myself as a *corpus vile*, and draw for a moment upon that.

Years ago, like everybody who was interested in Chaucer, I was puzzled by a mysterious reference to "the dry sea and the Carrenar." There was no Carrenar that anybody knew—nor, for that matter, any assured dry sea. One day, as I was reading in an old battered volume of *Purchas his Pilgrimes*

which is one of my choicest treasures, I was struck by the recurrence in a number of Central-Asian place-names, of the prefix *Kara*. But none of them had the termination *nar*. Might they offer, however, a possible clue? So I asked that one among my colleagues who is an adept in all outlandish tongues, what the combination Kara-nar would mean in any language which he knew. The instant answer was: Black Lake. The rest of the long tale I shall not tell. Suffice it to say that there was and is a lake called Kara-nor; that it lay and lies on the great ancient trade-route between Orient and Occident, travelled in Chaucer's time; and that the lake is at the edge of a vast and terrible desert which was and is, in name and character, a veritable dry sea. And the sole reason of my mention of the business here is this: Had the crux of the Carrenar not been very much alive in my head, I might have seen a thousand Kara's in the travel-books without a thrill, and so have missed the most fascinating exploration—barring two—I ever undertook. And these other two came about in precisely the same way: through the recognition as I read of something which suggested, through a likeness recognized, the solution of a puzzle which had found a lodgment in my mind, and which was there, once more, to recognize its like, when, without warning, its like turned up. I cannot lay too strong an emphasis upon the sort of pleasure which results from the constant recognition in what one

reads of things which link themselves, often in endlessly suggestive fashion, with things one has already read, till old friends with new faces meet us at every turn, and flash sudden light, and waken old associations, and quicken the zest for fresh adventures. To read with alert intellectual curiosity is one of the keenest joys of life, and it is pleasure which too many of us needlessly forgo.

Moreover, the dullest reading—and the world is full of very, very dull books, our share of which we are doomed to read as we are destined to meet our quota of bores in flesh and blood—the dullest books may become potential Ophirs and Golcondas, if we are looking for something as we read. If you know, every time you turn a page, that the thing you are looking for may leap to meet you on the next dull page, the task becomes an enthralling quest. There are few things more deadly in the world than the vast bulk of fourteenth-century French courtly verse. To read it just to read it—as we are in the habit of reading books—would bore the blithest spirit to extinction. Yet (to be personal again for the sake of first-hand testimony) I have read interminable masses of it again and again, each time with the sense of an adventure waiting beyond the next turn of the road, because each time I was on the trail of game—some clue, some corroboration of a guess, some evidence for this or that, which I hoped that I might find. Sometimes I have found it, sometimes not; but in any case the pages had

the charm of a desert island in which at any moment one might stumble upon signs of buried gold. I remember one rapid reading of numerous volumes in search of examples of a certain phrase which had uncommonly engaging implications. I found them—but that was only half the game. For on almost every page all sorts of other things kept starting up, which fitted in with this, or which illuminated that—some of them of far more intrinsic value than the elusive trifle which I was tracking; and so the fly-leaves of my books were steadily filling, as I read, with references to still more fruitful possibilities for further explorations. And that leads me to say two things.

In the first place, one cannot begin too soon to buy one's own books, if for no other reason (and there are many more) than the freedom which they give you to use their fly-leaves for your own private index of those matters in their pages which are particularly yours, whether for interest, or information, or what not—those things which the index-makers never by any possibility include. To be able to turn at will, in a book of your own, to those passages which count for *you*, is to have your wealth at instant command, and your books become a record of your intellectual adventures, and a source of endless pleasure when you want, as you will, to turn back to the things which have given delight, or stirred imagination, or opened windows, in the past.

That is one point. The other is this. Goethe observed to Eckermann one day, in those *Conversations* which constitute one of the most thought-provoking volumes in the world: "You know, Saul the son of Kish went out one day to find his father's asses, and found a kingdom." Which is a parable. For it is when you are looking for one thing as you read—it may be some utterly trivial affair—that ten to one you come upon the unexpected thing, the big or thrilling thing, which opens up new worlds of possibilities. Most of our discoveries—even if, as usually happens, they are discoveries only to us—are made when we are hot on the trail of something else. For because we are looking, we see, and we see more than we look for, because the eye which scans the page is actively alert to everything. And the more you *have*—the more live cluster-points of association there are in your brain—the more you see, and reading becomes a *cumulative* delight. "The dear good people," said Goethe once, "don't know how long it takes to learn to read. I've been at it eighty years, and can't say yet that I've reached the goal." One never does. There are always, as one goes on reading, unpath'd waters, undream'd shores ahead. And that is the secret of its perennial delight.

IV

One reads for the sheer enjoyment of it; one reads to learn; and there is a yet more excellent way. "Man *lernt* nichts," said Goethe of Winckelmann, "wenn man ihn liest, aber man *wird* etwas" —"you don't *learn* anything when you read him, but you *become* something." That strikes to the very root of things, for it puts into one pregnant phrase the supreme creative influence in the world —the contagious touch of great personalities. And if a good book is, in truth, as Milton in a noble passage once declared, "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life," then that creative influence of life on life is in the book, and as we read, our spirit is enriched and grows, and we *become* something. We are just a little ashamed these days, I know, in our reaction from a certain sort of cant, to read for our soul's sake, or our spirit's sake, or for edification, in the fine old sense of a sadly misused word. We feel, somehow, that it isn't quite the thing. Well, I don't care at all what terms you use; but we are more than intellect, and more than sense, and the deepest-lying springs of life are touched by life alone. And the men who have lived, and learned through living, and won through life a wide and luminous view—these men have the imperishable creative power of broadening, deepening, and enhancing life. They are the true human-

ists, and humanism, as I take it, is the development, not of scholars, not of philosophers, or scientists, or specialists in this or that, but of human beings. Goethe was such a humanist, and Goethe, by practice, not by precept, has pointed out the way.

"I read every year," he said, "a few plays of Molière, just as I also, from time to time, look over the engravings of the great Italian masters. For we little men aren't capable of maintaining within us the greatness of such things, and we have always to keep turning back to them from time to time, in order to quicken within us our impressions." "Today after dinner," wrote Eckermann—and this sort of thing happened again and again—"Goethe went through the portfolio of Raphael with me. He busies himself with Raphael very often, in order to keep himself always in touch with the best, and to exercise himself continually in thinking the thoughts of a great spirit after him." And this, mind you, was not a preacher, or a teacher, or a reformer, but the most puissant, richly endowed spirit of the modern world. Beyond delight, and beyond intellectual adventure, there is the spiritual contagion of great books.

And again I should like to be very practical, for we live in a busy world. Matthew Arnold once wrote in a letter, while he was off inspecting schools: "I enjoy my time here very much. I read five pages of Greek anthology every day, looking out all the words I do not know"—a very comfort-

ing remark, that last, for some of us. "This," he goes on, "is what I shall always understand by *education*, and it does me good, and gives me great pleasure." And the secret of his practice comes out in another letter, written this time to a British working man: "As to useful knowledge, a single line of poetry, working in the mind, may produce more thoughts and lead to more light, which is what man wants, than the fullest acquaintance (to take your own instance) with the processes of digestion." I am not sure, indeed, that anything which Arnold left is of more worth than his little, narrow, vest-pocket notebooks, which extend over a period of thirty-seven years. They served, not only for his record of engagements, but also as a repository for those passages of his daily reading which, in his own words, were "working in his mind"—those passages through pondering on which (to use Montaigne's phrase) he *forged*, instead of merely *furnishing*, his soul. The entries for a dozen years have been printed, in a precious volume, by his daughter, and they exemplify, as nothing else I know can do, the sort of reading which I now have in mind—that reading through which "man *wird* etwas." I take nothing back of what I have said of reading as a delightful intellectual adventure. But this is different—yet not so different after all. "I had an idea," wrote Keats in one of his letters,

that a Man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner

—let him on a certain day read a certain Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose, and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, and dream upon it, until it becomes stale—but when will it do so? Never. When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect, any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting-point towards all "the two-and-thirty Palaces."

Well, there before you are the palaces and the road thereto. I don't know where, for you, they are; I only know they are there.

We have no shrines, most of us, any more—we Protestant-Puritan-Pagan-Anglo-Saxon Occidentals—no tranquil Buddhas or symbols of the Passion by the roadside, no solemn temples, few cool, silent churches, always open and inviting to withdrawal for a moment from the hurly-burly of the world. It is not my business to determine whether that means loss or gain. But one thing it is always in our power to do—to withdraw now and then from the periphery to the centre, from the ceaseless whirl of the life that streams and eddies round us to the deep serenity of those great souls of better centuries ("ces grandes âmes des meilleurs siècles"), who give—and the lines sum up the antidote to the sick hurry of to-day—who give

> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And central peace, subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

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